109 Sermons and Tracts

by J. C. Ryle

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Daniel Rowlands, John Wesley, George Whitfield

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A CALL TO PRAYER

by J. C. Ryle

"Men ought always to pray." Luke 18:1

"I will that men pray everywhere." 1 Timothy 2:1

I have a question to offer you. It is contained in three words, DO YOU PRAY?

The question is one that none but you can answer. Whether you attend public worship or not, your minister knows. Whether you have family prayers or not your relations know. But whether you pray in private or not, is a matter between yourself and God.

I beseech you in all affections to attend to the subject I bring before you. Do not say that my question is too close. If your heart is right in the sight of God, there is nothing in it to make you afraid. Do not turn off my question by replying that you say your prayers. It is one thing to say your prayers and another to pray. Do not tell me that my question is necessary. Listen to me for a few minutes, and I will show you good reason for asking it.

I. I ASK WHETHER YOU PRAY, BECAUSE PRAYER IS ABSOLUTELY NEEDFUL TO A PERSON'S SALVATION.

I say, absolutely needful, and I say so advisedly. I am not speaking now of infants or idiots. I am not setting the state of the heathen. I know where little is given, there little will be required. I speak especially of those who call themselves Christians, in a land like our own. And of such I say, no man or woman can expect to be saved who does not pray.

I hold to salvation by grace as strongly as anyone. I would gladly offer a free and full pardon to the greatest sinner that ever lived. I would not hesitate to stand by their dying bed, and say, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ even now, and you shall be saved." But that a person can have salvation without asking for it, I cannot see in the Bible. That a person will receive pardon of their sins, who will not so much as lift up their heart inwardly, and say, "Lord Jesus, give it to me," this I cannot find. I can find that nobody will be saved by their prayers, but I cannot find that without prayer anybody will be saved.

It is not absolutely needful to salvation that a person should read the Bible. A person may have no learning, or be blind, and yet have Christ in their heart. It is not absolutely needful that a person should hear public preaching of the gospel. They may live where the gospel is not preached, or they may be bedridden, or deaf. But the same thing cannot be said about prayer. It is absolutely needful to salvation that a person should pray.

There is no royal road either to health or learning. Prime ministers and kings, poor men and peasants, all alike attend to the needs of their own bodies and their own minds. No person can eat, drink, or sleep, by proxy. No person can get the alphabet learned for them by another. All these are things which everybody must do for themselves, or they will not be done at all.

Just as it is with the mind and body, so it is with the soul. There are certain things absolutely needful to the soul's health and well-being. Each must attend to these things for themselves. Each must repent for them self. Each must apply to Christ for them self. And for them self each must speak to God and pray. You must do it for yourself, for by nobody else it can be done. To be prayerless is to be without God, without Christ, without grace, without hope, and without heaven. It is to be in the road to hell. Now can you wonder that I ask the question, DO YOU PRAY?

II. I ASK AGAIN WHETHER YOU PRAY, BECAUSE A HABIT OF PRAYER IS ONE OF THE SUREST MARKS OF A TRUE CHRISTIAN.

All the children of God on earth are alike in this respect. From the moment there is any life and reality about their religion, they pray. Just as the first sign of the life of an infant when born into the world is the act of breathing, so the first act of men and women when they are born again is praying.

This is one of the common marks of all the elect of God, "They cry unto him day and night." Luke 18:1. The Holy Spirit who makes them new creatures, works in them a feeling of adoption, and makes the cry, "Abba, Father." Romans 8:15. The Lord Jesus, when he quickens them, gives them a voice and a tongue, and says to them, "Be dumb no more." God has no dumb children. It is as much a part of their new nature to pray, as it is of a child to cry. They see their need of mercy and grace. They feel their emptiness and weakness. They cannot do other wise than they do. They must pray.

I have looked careful over the lives of God's saints in the Bible. I cannot find one whose history much is told us, from Genesis to Revelation, who was not a person of prayer. I find it mentioned as a characteristic of the godly, that "they call on the Father," that "they call upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ." I find it recorded as a characteristic of the wicked, that "they call not upon the Lord." 1 Peter 1:17; 1 Corinthians 1:2; Psalm 14:4.

I have read the lives of many eminent Christians who have been on earth since the Bible days. Some of them, I see, were rich, and some poor. Some were learned, and some were unlearned. Some of them were Episcopalians, and some were Christians of other names. Some were Calvinists, and some were Arminians. Some have loved to use liturgy, and some to use none. But one thing, I see, they all had in common. They have all been people of prayer.

I have studied reports of missionary societies in our own times. I see with joy that lost men and women are receiving the gospel in various parts of the globe. There are conversions in Africa, in New Zealand, in India, in China. The people converted are naturally unlike one another in every respect. But one striking thing I observe at all the missionary stations: the converted people always pray.

I do not deny that a person may pray without heart and without sincerity. I do not for a moment pretend to say that the mere fact of a people' praying proves everything about their soul. As in every other part of religion, so also in this, there may be deception and

hypocrisy.

But this I do say, that not praying is a clear proof that a person is not yet a true Christian. They cannot really feel their sins. They cannot love God. They cannot feel themselves a debtor to Christ. They cannot long after holiness. They cannot desire heaven. They have yet to be born again. They have yet to be made a new creature. They may boast confidently of election, grace, faith, hope and knowledge, and deceive ignorant people. But you may rest assured it is all vain talk if they do not pray.

And I say furthermore, that of all the evidences of the real work of the Spirit, a habit of hearty private prayer is one of the most satisfactory that can be named. A person may preach from false motives. A person may write books and ,make fine speeches and seem diligent in good works, and yet be a Judas Iscariot. But a person seldom goes into their closet and pours out their soul before God in secret, unless they are in earnest. The Lord himself has set his stamp on prayer as the best proof of conversion. When he sent Ananias to Saul in Damascus, he gave him no other evidence of his change of heart than this, "Behold he prays." Acts 9:11.

I know that much may go on in a person's mind before they are brought to pray. They may have many convictions, desires, wishes, feelings, intentions, resolutions, hopes, and fears. But all these things are very uncertain evidences. They are to be found in ungodly people, and often come to nothing. In many a case they are not more lasting than the morning cloud, and dew that passes away. A real hearty prayer, moving from a broken and contrite spirit, is worth all these things put together.

I know that the Holy Spirit, who calls sinners from their evil ways, does in many instances lead them by very slow degrees to acquaintance with Christ. But the eye of man can only judge by what it sees. I can not call anyone justified until they believe. I dare not say that anyone believes until they pray. I cannot understand a dumb faith. The first act of faith will be to speak to God. Faith is to the soul what life is to the body. Prayer is to faith what breath is to the body. How a person can live and not breathe is past my comprehension, and how a person can believe and not pray is past my comprehension too.

Never be surprised if you hear ministers of the gospel dwelling much on the importance of prayer. This is the point they want to bring to you. They want to know that you pray. Your views of doctrine may be correct. Your love of Protestantism may be warm and unmistakable. But still this may be nothing more than head knowledge and party spirit. They want to know whether you are actually acquainted with the throne of grace, and whether you can speak to God as well as speak about God.

III. I ASK WHETHER YOU PRAY, BECAUSE THERE IS NO DUTY IN RELIGION SO NEGLECTED AS PRIVATE PRAYER.

We live in days of abounding religious profession. There are more places of public worship than there ever was before. There are more people attending them than there ever was before. And yet in spite of all this public religion, I believe there is a vast neglect of private prayer. It is one of those private transcripts between God and our souls which no eye sees, and therefore one which people are tempted to pass over and leave undone.

I believe that hundreds of thousands never utter a word of prayer at all. They eat. They drink. They sleep. They rise. They go forth to their work. They return to their homes. They breathe God's air. They travel on God's earth. They enjoy God's mercies. They have dying bodies. They have judgment and eternity before them. But they never speak to God. They live like the animals that perish. They behave like creatures without souls. They have not one word to say to Him in whose hand are their life and breath, and all things, and from whose mouth they must one day receive their everlasting sentence. How dreadful this seems; but if the secrets of people, were daily known, how common.

I believe there are hundreds of thousands whose prayers are nothing but mere form, a set of words repeated by rote, without a thought about there meaning. Some say over a few hasty sentences picked up in the nursery when they were children. Some content themselves with repeating the Creed, forgetting that there is not a request in it. Some add the Lord's Prayer, but without the slightest desire that its solemn petitions may be granted.

Many, even those who use good forms, mutter their prayers over after they have got to bed, or while they wash or dress in the morning. People may think what they please, but they may depend upon it that in the sight of God this is not praying. Words said without heart are as utterly useless to our souls as the drum beating of savages before their idols. Where there is no heart, there may be lip-work and tongue-work, but there is no prayer. Saul, I have no doubt, said many a long prayer before the Lord met him on the way to Damascus. But it was not until his heart was broken that the Lord said. "He prays."

Does this surprise you? Listen to me, and I will show you that I am not speaking as I do without reason. Do you think that my assertions are extravagant and unwarrantable? Give me your attention, and I will soon show you that I am only telling you the truth.

Have you forgotten that it is not natural to any one to pray? "The carnal mind is enmity against God." The desire of a person's heart is to get far away from God, and have nothing to do with him. Their feelings towards him is not but fear. Why then should a person pray when they have no real sense of sin , no real feeling of spiritual needs, no thorough belief in unseen things, no desire after holiness and heaven? Of all these things the vast majority of people know and feel nothing. The multitudes walk in the broad way. I cannot forget this. Therefore I say boldly, I believe that few pray.

Have you forgotten that it is not fashionable to pray? It is one of those things that many would be rather ashamed to admit. There are hundreds who would rather storm a breach, or lead a forlorn hope then confess publicly that they make a habit of prayer. There are thousands who, if obliged to sleep in the same room with a stranger, would lie down in bed without a prayer. To dress well, to go to theaters, to be thought clever and agreeable, all this is fashionable, but not to pray. I cannot forget this. I cannot think a habit is common which so many seem ashamed to admit. Thus I believe that few pray.

Have you forgotten the lives that many live? Can we really believe that people are praying against sin night and day, when we see

them plunging into it? Can we suppose they pray against the world, when they are entirely absorbed and taken up with its pursuits? Can we think they really ask God for grace to serve him, when they do not show the slightest interest to serve him at all? Oh, no, it is plain as daylight that the great majority of people either ask nothing of God or do not mean what they say when they do ask, which is just the same thing. Praying and sinning will never live together in the same heart. Prayer will consume sin, or sin will choke prayer. I cannot forget this. I look at people's lives. I believe that few pray.

Have you forgotten the deaths that many die? How many, when they draw near death, seem entirely strangers to God. Not only are they sadly ignorant of his gospel, but sadly lacking in the power of speaking to him. There is a terrible awkwardness and shyness in their endeavors to approach him. They seem to be taking up a fresh thing. They appear as if they want an introduction to God, and as if they have never talked with him before. I remember having heard of person who was anxious to have a minister to visit them in their last illness. They desired that he would pray for them. He asked her what he should pray for. They did not know, and could not tell. They were utterly unable to name any one thing which they wished to ask God for their soul. All they seemed to want was the form of a minister's prayers. I can quite understand this. Death-beds are great revealers of secrets. I cannot forget what I have seen of sick and dying people. This also leads me to believe that few people pray.

I cannot see your heart. I do not know your private history in spiritual things. But from what I see in the Bible and in the world I am certain I cannot ask you a more necessary question than that before you- DO YOU PRAY?

IV. I ASK WHETHER YOU PRAY, BECAUSE PRAYER IS AN ACT OF RELIGION TO WHICH THERE IS GREAT ENCOURAGEMENT.

There is everything on God's part to make prayer east if people will only attempt it. All things are ready on his side. Every objection is anticipated. Every difficulty is provided for. the crooked places are made straight and the rough places made smooth. There is no excuse left for the prayerless person.

There is a way by which any person, however sinful and unworthy, may draw near to God the Father. Jesus Christ has opened that way by the sacrifice he made for us upon the cross. The holiness and justice of God need not frighten sinners and keep them back. Only let them cry to God in the name of Jesus, and they shall find God upon the throne of grace, willing and ready to hear. The name of Jesus is a never-failing passport for our prayers. In that name a person may draw near to God with boldness, and ask with confidence. God has engaged to hear him. Think of this. Is this not an encouragement?

There is an Advocate and Intercessor always waiting to present the prayers of those who come to God through him. That advocate is Jesus Christ. He mingles our prayers with the incense of his own almighty intercession. So mingled, they go up as a sweet savor before the throne of God. Poor as they are in themselves, they are mighty and powerful in the hand of our High Priest and Elder Brother. The bank-note without a signature at the bottom is nothing but a worthless piece of paper. The stroke of a pen confers on it all its value. The prayer of a poor child of Adam is a feeble thing in itself, but once endorsed by the hand of the Lord Jesus it avails much. There was an officer in the city of Rome who appointed to have his doors always open, in order to receive any Roman citizen who applied to him for help. Just so the ear of the Lord Jesus is ever open to the cry of all who need mercy and grace. It is his office to help them. Their prayer is his delight. Think of this. Is this not and encouragement?

There is the Holy Spirit ever ready to help our infirmities in prayer. It is one part of his special office is assist us in our endeavors to speak to God. We need not be cast down and distressed by the fear of not knowing what to say. The Spirit will give us words if we seek his aid. The prayers of the Lord's people are the inspiration of the Lord's Spirit, the work of the Holy Spirit who dwells within them as the Spirit of grace and supplication. Surely the Lord's people may well hope to be heard. It is not merely those who pray, but the Holy Spirit pleading in them. Think of this. Is not this an encouragement?

There are exceeding great and precious promises to those who pray. What did the Lord Jesus mean when he spoke such words as these: "Ask and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and the door shall be opened unto you: for every one that asks, receives; and he that seeks, finds; and to him who knocks, it shall be opened." Matthew 7:7,8. "All things whatever you shall ask in prayer believing, you shall receive ." Matthew 12:22. "Whatever you shall ask in my name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you shall ask anything in my name I will do it." John 14:13,14. What did the Lord mean when he spoke the parables of The friend at midnight and The importunate widow? Luke 11:5, 18:1. Think over these passages. If this is not an encouragement to pray, words have no meaning.

There are wonderful examples in the Scripture of the power of prayer. Nothing seems to be too great, too hard, or too difficult for prayer to do. It has obtained things that seemed impossible and out of reach. It has won victories over fire, air earth, and water. Prayer opened up the Red Sea . Prayer brought water from the rock and bread from heaven. Prayer made the sun stand still. Prayer brought fire from the sky on Elijah's sacrifice. Prayer turned the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness. Prayer overthrew the army of Sennacherib. Well might Mary Queen of Scots say, "I fear John Knox's prayers more than an army of ten thousand men." Prayer has healed the sick. Prayer has raised the dead. Prayer has procured the conversion of souls. "The child of many prayers," said and old Christian to Augustine's mother, "shall never perish." Prayer, pains, and faith can do anything. Nothing seems impossible when a person has the spirit of adoption. "Let me alone," is the remarkable saying of God to Moses when Moses was about to intercede for the children of Israel. Exodus 32:10. So long as Abraham asked mercy for Sodom, the Lord went on giving. He never ceased to give until Abraham ceased to pray. Think of this. Is this not an encouragement?

What can a person need to lead them to take any step in religion, than the things I have just told you about prayer? What more could be done to make the path to the mercy seat easy, and to remove all occasions of stumbling from the sinners way? Surely if the devils in hell had such a door set before them, they would leap for gladness and make the very pit ring with joy.

But where will the person hide their head at the last who neglects such glorious encouragements? What can possibly be said for the

person who, after all, dies without prayer? Surely I may fell anxious that you should not be that person. Surely I may well ask-DO YOU PRAY?

V. I ASK WHETHER YOU PRAY, BECAUSE DILIGENCE IN PRAYER IS THE SECRET OF EMINENT HOLINESS.

Without controversy there is a vast difference among true Christians. There is an immense interval between the foremost and the hindermost in the army of God.

They are all fighting the same good fight but how much more valiantly some fight than others. They are all doing the Lord's work but how much more some do than others. They are all light in the Lord; but how much more brightly some shine than others. They are all running the same race; but how much faster some get on than others. They all love the same Lord and Savior; but how much more some love him than others. I ask any true Christian whether this is not the case. Are these things not so?

There are some of the Lord's people who seem never able to get on from the time of their conversion. They are born again, but they remain babies all their lives. You hear from them the same old experience. You remark in them the same lack of spiritual appetite, the same lack of interest in anything beyond their own little circle, which you remarked ten years ago. They are pilgrims indeed, but pilgrims like the Gibeonites of old; their bread is always dry and moldy, their shoes always old, and their garments always rent and torn. I say this with sorrow and grief; but I ask any real Christian, Is it not true?

There are others of the Lord's people who seem to be always advancing. They grow like grass after rain; they increase like Israel in Egypt; they press on like Gideon, though sometimes faint, yet always pursuing. They are ever adding grace to grace, and faith to faith, and strength to strength. Every time you meet them their hearts seems larger, and their spiritual stature taller and stronger. Every year they appear ,ore, and feel more in their religion. They not only have good works to prove the reality of their faith, but the are zealous of them. they are not only do well, but they are unwearied in well doing. They attempt great things, and they do great things. When they fail they try again, and when they fall they are soon up again. And all this time they think themselves poor, unprofitable servants, and fancy that they do nothing at all. These are those who make religion lovely and beautiful in the eyes of all. They wrest praise even from the unconverted and win golden opinions even from the selfish people of the world. It does one good to see. to be with them, and to hear them. When you meet them, you could believe that like Moses, they had just come out from the presence of God. When you part with them you feel warmed by their company, as if your soul had been near a fire. I know such people are rare. I only ask, Are there not many such?

Now how can you account for the difference which I have just described? What is the reason that some believers are so much brighter and holier than others? I believe the difference, in nineteen cases out of twenty, arises from different habits about private prayer. I believe that those who are not eminently holy pray little, and those who are eminently holy pray much.

I dare say this opinion may startle some hearers. I have little doubt that many look on eminent holiness as a kind of special gift, which none but a few must pretend to aim at. They admire it at a distance in books. They think it beautiful when they he an example near themselves. But as to its being a thing within the reach of any but a very few, such a notion never seems to enter their minds. In short, they consider it a kind of monopoly granted to a few favored believers, but certainly not to all.

Now I believe that this is a most dangerous mistake. I believe that spiritual as well as natural greatness depends in a high degree on the faithful use of means within everybody's reach. Of course I do not say we have a right to expect a miraculous grant of intellectual gifts; but I do say, that when a person is once converted to God, his progress in holiness will be much in accordance with their own diligence in the use of God's appointed means. And I assert confidently that the principle means by which most believers have become great in the church of Christ is the habit of diligent private prayer. Look through the lives of the brightest and best of God's servants, whether in the Bible or not. See what is written of Moses and David and Daniel and Paul. Mark what is recorded of Luther and Bradford the Reformers. Observe what is related of the private devotions of Whitefield and Cecil and Venn and Bickersteth and McCheyne. Tell me of one of the goodly fellowship of saints and martyrs, who has not had this mark most prominently-they were men of prayer. Depend on it, prayer is power.

Prayer obtains fresh and continued outpourings of the Spirit. He alone begins the work of grace in a people heart. He alone can carry it forward and make it prosper. But the good Spirit loves to be entreated. And those who ask most will have most of his influence.

Prayer is the surest remedy against the devil and besetting sins. That sin will never stand firm which is heartily prayed against. The devil will never long keep dominion over us which beseech the Lord to cast forth. But then we must spread out all our case before our heavenly Physician, if he is to give us daily relief.

Do you wish to grow in grace and be a devoted Christian? Be very sure, if you wish it, you could not have a more important question than this-DO YOU PRAY?

VI. I ASK WHETHER YOU PRAY, BECAUSE NEGLECT OF PRAYER IS ONE OF THE GREATEST CAUSES OF BACKSLIDING.

There is such a thing as going back in religion after making a good profession. People may run well for a season, like the Galatians, and then turn aside after false teachers. People may profess loudly while their feelings are warm, as Peter did, and then in the hour of trial deny their Lord. People may cool down in their zeal to do good, like John Mark the companion of Paul. People may follow an apostle for a season, and like Demas go back to the world. All these things people may do.

It is a miserable thing to be a backslider. Of all unhappy things that can befall a person, I suppose it is the worst. A stranded ship, a broken-winged eagle, a garden overrun with weeds, a harp without strings, a church in ruins, all these are sad sights, but a backslider

is a sadder still. A wounded conscience-a mind sick of itself-a memory full of self-reproach-a heart pierced through with the Lord's arrows- a-spirit broken with the inward accusation-all this is a taste of hell. It is hell on earth. Truly that saying of the wise man is solemn and weighty, "The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways." Proverbs 14:14.

Now what is the case of most backslidings? I believe, as a general rule, one of the chief causes is neglected private prayer. Of course the secret history of falls will not be know until the last day. I can only give my opinion as a minister of Christ and a student of the heart. That opinions, I repeat distinctly, that backsliding generally first begins with neglect of private prayer.

Bibles read without prayer; sermons heard without prayer; marriages contracted without prayer; journeys undertaken without prayer; residences chosen without prayer; friendships formed without prayer; the daily act of prayer itself hurried over, or gone through without heart: these are the kind of downward steps by which many a Christian descends to a condition of spiritual palsy, or reaches the point where God allows them to have a tremendous fall.

This is the process which forms the lingering Lots, the unstable Samsons, the innocent Asas, the pliable Jehoshaphats, the over-careful Marthas, of whom so many are to be found in the church of Christ. Often the simple history of such cases is this: the became careless about private prayer.

You may be vary sure people fall in private long before they fall in public. They are backsliders on their knees long before they backslide openly in the eyes of the world. Like Peter, they first disregard the Lord's warning to watch and pray, and then like Peter, their strength is gone, and in the hour of temptation they deny their Lord.

The world takes notice of their fall, and scoffs loudly. But the world knows nothing of the real reason. The heathen succeeded in making a well-know Christians offer incense to an idol, by threatening them with a punishment worse than death. They triumphed greatly in the sight of their cowardice and apostasy. But the heathen did not know the fact of which history informs us, that on that very morning he had left his bed-chamber hastily, and without finishing his usual prayers.

If you are a Christian indeed, I trust you will never be a backslider. But if you do not want to be a backsliding Christian, remember the question I ask you: DO YOU PRAY?

VII. I ASK, LASTLY, WHETHER YOU PRAY BECAUSE PRAYER IS ONE OF THE BEST MEANS OF HAPPINESS AND CONTENTMENT.

We live in a world where sorrow abounds. This has always been the state since sin came in. There cannot be sin without sorrow. And until sin is driven out from the world, it is vain for any one to suppose they can escape sorrow.

Some without doubt have a larger cup of sorrow to drink than others. But few are to be found who live long without sorrows or cares of one sort or another. Our bodies, our property, our families, our children, our relations, our servants, our friends, our neighbors, our worldly callings, each and all of these are fountains of care. Sickness, deaths, losses, disappointments, partings, separations, ingratitude, slander, all these are common things. We cannot get through life without them. Some day or other they find us out. The greater are our affections the deeper are our afflictions, and the more we love the more we have to weep.

And what is the best means of cheerfulness in such a world as this? How shall we get through this valley of tears with the least pain? I know no better means than the habit of taking everything to God in prayer.

This is the plain advice that the Bible gives, both in the Old Testament and New. What says the Psalmist? "Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver you and you shall glorify me." Psalm 50:15. "Cast your burden upon the Lord and he shall sustain you: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved." Psalm 55:22. What says the apostle Paul? "Be careful for nothing; but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let you requests be made know unto God: and the peace of God, which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:6,7. What says the apostle James: "Is any afflicted among you? let him pray." James 5:13.

This was the practice of all the saints whose history we have recorded in the Scriptures. This is what Jacob did when he feared his brother Esau. this is what Moses did when the people were ready to stone him in the wilderness. This is what Joshua did when Israel was defeated before the men of Ai. This is what David did when he was in danger in Keliah. This what Hezekiah did when he received the letter from Sennacherib. This is what the church did when peter was put in prison. This is what Paul did when he was cast into the dungeon at Philippi.

The only way to really happy in such a world as this, is to ever casting all our cares on God. It is trying to carry their own burdens which so often makes believers sad. If they will tell their troubles to God, he will enable them to bear them as easily as Samson did the gates of Gaza. If they are resolved to keep them to themselves, they will one day find that the very grasshopper is a burden.

There is a friend ever waiting to help us, if we will unbosom to him our sorrow-a friend who pitied the poor and sick and sorrowful, when he was upon earth-a friend who knows the heart of man, for he lived thirty-three years as a man among us-a friend who can weep with the weepers, for he was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief-a friend who is able to help us, for there never was earthly pain he could not cure. That friend is Jesus Christ. The way to be happy is to be always opening our hearts to him. Oh that we were all like that poor Christian slave who only answered when threatened and punished, "I must tell the Lord."

Jesus can make those happy who trust him and call him, whatever be their outward condition. He can give them peace of heart in a prison, contentment in the midst of poverty, comfort in the midst of bereavements, joy on the brink of the grave. There is a mighty fullness that is ready to be poured out on every one that will ask in prayer. Oh that people would understand that happiness does not

depend on outward circumstances, but on the state of the heart.

Prayer can lighten crosses for us, however heavy. It can bring down to our side One who will help us to bear them. Prayer can open a door for us when our way seems hedged up. It can bring down One who will say, "This is the way, walk in it." Prayer can let in a ray of hope when all our earthly prospects seem darkened. It can bring down One who will say, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." Prayer can obtain relief for us when those we love most are taken away, and the world feels empty. It can bring down One who can fill the gap in our hearts with himself, and say to the waves within, "Peace; be still." Oh that people were not so like Hagar in the wilderness, blind to the well of living waters close beside them.

I want you to be happy. I know I cannot ask you a more useful question than this: DO YOU PRAY?

And now it is high time for me to bring this tract to an end. I trust I have brought before you things that will be seriously considered. I heartily pray God that this consideration may be blessed to your soul.

Let me speak a parting word to THOSE WHO DO NOT PRAY.

I dare not suppose that all those who read these pages are praying people. If you are a prayerless person, suffer me to speak to you this day on God's behalf.

Prayerless reader, I can only warn you but I do warn you most solemnly. I warn you that you are in a position of fearful danger. If you die in your present state, you are a lost soul. You will only rise again to be eternally miserable. I warn you that all professing Christians you are utterly without excuse. There is not a single good reason that you can show for living without prayer.

It is useless to say you know not how to pray. Prayer is the simplest act in all religion. It is simply speaking to God. It needs neither learning nor wisdom nor book-knowledge to begin it. It needs nothing but heart and will. The weakest infant can cry when it is hungry. The poorest beggar can hold out their hand for alms, and does not wait to find fine words. The most ignorant person will find something to say to God, if they have only a mind.

It is useless to say you have no convenient place to pray in. Any person can find a place private enough, if they are disposed. Our Lord prayed on a mountain; Peter on the house-top; Isaac in the field; Nathaniel under the fig-tree; Jonah in the whale's belly. Any place may become a closet, an oratory, and a Bethel, and be to us the presence of God.

It is useless to say you have no time. There is plenty of time, if people will employ it. Time may be short, but time is always long enough for prayer. Daniel had the affairs of a kingdom on his hands, and yet he prayed three times a day. David was the ruler over a mighty nation, and yet he says, "Evening and morning and at noon will I pray." Psalm 55:17. When time is really wanted, time can always be found.

It is useless to say you cannot pray until you have faith and a new heart, and that you must sit still and wait for them. This is to add sin to sin. It is bad enough to be unconverted and going to hell. It is even worse to say, "I know it, but will not cry for mercy." This is a kind of argument for which there is no warrant in Scripture. "Call you upon the Lord," says Isaiah, "while he is near." Isaiah 55:6. "Take with you words, and turn unto the Lord," says Hosea. Hosea 14:1. "Repent and pray," says Peter to Simon Magus. Acts 8:22. If you want faith and a new heart, go and cry to the Lord for them. The very attempt to pray has often been the quickening of a dead soul.

Oh, prayerless reader, who and what are you that you will not ask anything of God? Have you made a covenant with the dead and hell? Are you at peace with the worm and fire? Have you no sins to be pardoned? Have you no fear of eternal torment? Have you no desires after heaven? Oh that you would awake from your present folly. Oh that you would consider your latter end. Oh that you would arise and call upon God. Alas, there is a day coming when many shall pray loudly, "Lord, Lord, open to us," but all too late; when many shall cry to the rocks to fall on them and the hills to cover them, who would never cry to God. In all affection, I warn you, beware lest this be the end of your soul. Salvation is very near you. Do not lose heaven for want of asking.

Let me speak TO THOSE WHO HAVE REAL DESIRES FOR SALVATION, but know not what steps to take, or where to begin.

I cannot but hope that some readers may be in this state of mind, and if there be but one such I must offer them affectionate counsel.

In a journey there must be a first step. There must be a change from sitting to moving forward. The journeyings of Israel from Egypt to Canaan were long and wearisome. Forty years pass away before they crossed the Jordan. Yet there was some one who moved first when they marched from Ramah to Succoth. When does a person really take their first step in coming out of sin and the world? They do it the day when they first pray with their heart.

In every building the first stone must be laid, and the first blow must be struck. The ark was one hundred and twenty years in the building. Yet there was a day when Noah laid his axe to the first tree he cut down to form it. The temple of Solomon was a glorious building. But there was a day when the first huge stone was laid deep in mount Moriah. When does the building of the Spirit really begin to appear in a person's heart? It begins, so far as we can judge, when they first pour out their heart to God in prayer.

If you desire salvation, and want to know what to do, I advise you to go this very day to the Lord Jesus Christ, in the first private place you can find, and earnestly and heartily entreat him in prayer to save your soul.

Tell him that you have heard that he receives sinners, and he has said, "Him that comes unto me I will in nowise cast out." Tell him

that you are a poor vile sinner, and that you come to him on the faith of his own invitation. Tell him you put yourself wholly and entirely in his hands: that you feel vile and helpless, and hopeless in yourself: and that except he saves you, you have no hope of being saved at all. Beseech him to deliver you from guilt, the power, and the consequences of sin. Beseech him to pardon you, and wash you in his own blood. Beseech him to give you a new heart, and plant the Holy Spirit in your soul. Beseech him to give you grace and faith and will and power to be his disciple and servant from this day forever. Oh, reader, go this very day, and tell these things to the Lord Jesus Christ, if you are really in earnest about your soul.

Tell him in your own way, and your own words. If a doctor came to see you when you were sick you could tell him where you felt pain. If your soul feels its disease indeed, you can surely find something to tell Christ. Doubt not his willingness to save you, because you are a sinner. It is Christ's office to save sinners. He says himself, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Luke 5:32.

Wait not because you fell unworthy. Wait for nothing. Wait for nobody. Waiting comes from the devil. Just as you are, go to Christ. The worse you are, the more need you have to apply to him. You will never mend yourself by staying away.

Fear not because your prayer is stammering, your words feeble, and your language poor. Jesus can understand you. Just as a mother understands the first lispings of her infant, so does the blessed Savior understand sinners. He can read a sigh, and see a meaning in a groan.

Despair not because you do not get an answer immediately. While you are speaking, Jesus is listening. If he delays an answer, it is only for wise reasons, and to try if you are in earnest. The answer will surely come. Though it tarry, wait for it. It will surely come.

Oh, reader, if you have any desire to be saved, remember the advice I have given to you this day. Act upon it honestly and heartily, and you shall be saved.

Let me speak, lastly, TO THOSE WHO DO PRAY.

I trust that some who read this tract know well what prayer is, and have the Spirit of adoption. To all such, I offer a few words of brotherly counsel and exhortation. The incense offered in the tabernacle was ordered to be made in a particular way. Not every kind of incense would do. Let us remember this, and be careful about the matter and manner of our prayers.

Brethren who pray, if I know anything of a Christian's heart, you are often sick of your own prayers. You never enter into the apostle's words, "When I would do good, evil is present with me." so thoroughly as you sometimes do upon your knees. You can understand David's words, "I hate vain thoughts." You can sympathize with that poor converted Hottentot who was overheard praying, "Lord, deliver me from all my enemies, and above all, from that bad man-myself." There are few children of God who do not often find the season of prayer a season of conflict. The devil has special wrath against us when he sees us on our knees. Yet, I believe that prayers which cost us no trouble, should be regarded with great suspicion. I believe we are very poor judges of the goodness of our prayers, and that the prayer which pleases us least, often pleases God most. Suffer me then, as a companion in the Christian warfare, to offer a few words of exhortation. One thing, at least, we all feel: we must pray. We cannot give it up. We must go on.

I commend then to your attention, the importance of reverence and humility in prayer. Let us never forget what we are, and what a solemn thing it is to speak with God. Let us beware of rushing into his presence with carelessness and levity. Let us say to ourselves: "I am on holy ground. This is no other than the gate of heaven. If I do not mean what I say, I am trifling with God. If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." Let us keep in mind the words of Solomon, "Do not be rash with your mouth, and let not your heart be hasty to utter anything before God; for God is in heaven, and you on earth." Ecclesiastes 5:2. When Abraham spoke to God, he said, "I am dust and ashes." When Jacob spoke to God, he said, "I am vile." Let us do likewise.

I commend to you the importance of praying spiritually. I mean by that, that we should labor always to have the direct help of the Spirit in our prayers, and beware above all things of formality. There is nothing so spiritual that it may become a form, and this is especially true of private prayer. We may insensibly get into the habit of using the fittest possible words, and offering the most scriptural petitions, and yet do it all by rote without feeling it, and walk daily round an old beaten path. I desire to touch this point with caution and delicacy. I know that there are certain things we daily want, and that there is nothing necessarily formal in asking for these things in the same words. The world, the devil, and our hearts, are daily the same. Of necessity we must daily go over old ground. But this I say, we must be very careful on this point. If the skeleton and outline of our prayers be by habit almost form, let us strive that the clothing and filling up of our prayers, be as far as possible of the Spirit. As to praying of a book in our private devotions, it is a habit I cannot praise. If we can tell our doctors the state of our bodies without a book, we ought to be able to tell the state of our souls to God. I have no objection to a person using crutches when they are first recovering from a broken limb. It is better to use crutches, than not to walk at all. But if I saw them all their life on crutches, I should not think it matter for congratulation. I should like to see them strong enough to throw their crutches away.

I commend to you the importance of making prayer a regular business of life. I might say something of the value of regular times in the day for prayer. God is a God of order. The hours for morning and evening sacrifice in the Jewish temple were not fixed as they were without a meaning. Disorder is eminently one of the fruits of sin. But I would not bring any under bondage. This only I say, that it is essential to your soul's health to make praying a part of the business of every twenty-four hours of your life. Just as you allot time to eating, sleeping, and business, so also allot time to prayer. Choose your own hours and seasons. At the very least, speak with God in the morning, before you speak with the world: and speak with God at night, after you have done with the world. But settle it in your minds, that praying is one of the great things of every day. Do not drive it into a corner. Do not give it the scraps and parings of your duty. Whatever else you make a business of, make a business of prayer.

I commend to you the importance of perseverance in prayer. Once having begun the habit, never give it up. Your heart will

sometimes say, "You will have had family prayers: what mighty harm if you leave private prayer undone?" Your body will sometimes say, "You are unwell, or sleepy, or weary; you need not pray." Your mind will sometimes say, "You have important business to attend to to-day; cut short your prayers." Look on all such suggestions as coming direct from Satan. They are all as good as saying, "Neglect your soul." I do not maintain that prayers should always be of the same length; but I do say, let no excuse make you give up prayer. Paul said, "Continue in prayer and, "Pray without ceasing." He did not mean that people should be always on their knees, but he did mean that our prayers should be like the continual burned-offering steadily preserved in every day; that it should be like seed-time and harvest, and summer and winter, unceasingly coming round at regular seasons; that it should be like the fire on the altar, not always consuming sacrifices, but never completely going out. Never forget that you may tie together morning and evening devotions, by an endless chain of short ejaculatory prayers throughout the day. Even in company, or business, or in the very streets, you may be silently sending up little winged messengers to God, as Nehemiah did in the very presence of Artaxerxes. And never think that time is wasted which is given to God. A nation does not become poorer because it looses one year of working days in seven, by keeping the Sabbath. A Christian never finds he is a loser, in the long run, by persevering in prayer.

I commend to you the importance of earnestness in prayer. It is not that a person should shout, or scream, or be very loud, in order to prove that they are in earnest. But it is desirable that we should be hearty and fervent and warm, and ask as if we were really interested in what we were doing. It is the "effectual fervent" prayer that "avails much." This is the lesson that is taught us by the expressions used in Scripture about prayer. It is called, "crying, knocking, wrestling, laboring, striving." This is the lesson taught us by scripture examples. Jacob is one. He said to the angel at Penuel, "I will not let you go, except you bless me." Genesis 32:26. Daniel is another. Hear how he pleaded with God: "O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for your won sake, O my God." Daniel 9:19. Our Lord Jesus Christ is another. It is written of him, "In the days of his flesh, he offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears." Hebrews 5:7. Alas, how unlike is this to many of our supplications! How tame and lukewarm they seem by comparison. How truly might God say to many of us, "You do not really want what you pray for." Lets us try to amend this fault. Let us knock loudly at the door of grace, like Mercy in Pilgrim's Progress, as if we must perish unless heard. Let us settle it in our minds, that cold prayers are a sacrifice without fire. Let us remember the story of Demosthenes the great orator, when one came to him, and wanted to plead his cause. He heard him without attention, while he told his story without earnestness. The man saw this, and cried out with anxiety that it was all true. "Ah," said Demosthenes, "I believe you now."

I commend to you the importance of praying in faith. We should endeavor to believe that our prayers are heard, and that if we ask things according to God's will, we shall be answered. This is the plain command of our Lord Jesus Christ: "Whatever things you desire, when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you shall have them." Mark 11:24. Faith is to prayer what the feather is to the arrow: without it prayer will not hit the mark. We should cultivate the habit of pleading promises in our prayers. We should take with us some promises, and sat., "Lord, here is your own word pledged. Do for us as you have said." This was the habit of Jacob and Moses and David. The 119 th Psalm is full of things asked, "according to your word." Above all, we should cultivate the habit of expecting answers to our prayers. We should do like the merchant who sends his ships to sea. We should not be satisfied, unless we see some return. Alas, there are few points on which Christians come short so much as this. The church at Jerusalem made prayer without ceasing for Peter in prison; but when the prayer was answered, they would hardly believe it. Acts 12:15. It is a solemn saying of Robert Trail, "There is no surer mark of trifling in prayer, than when men are careless what they get in prayer."

I commend to you the importance of boldness in prayer. There is an unseemly familiarity in some people's prayers which I cannot praise. But there is such a thing as a holy boldness, which is exceedingly to be desired. I mean such boldness as that of Moses, when he pleads with God not to destroy Israel "Wherefore," says he, "should the Egyptians speak and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains? Turn from your fierce anger." Exodus 32:12. I mean such boldness as that of Joshua, when the children of Israel were defeated before men of Ai: "What," says he, "will you do unto your great name?" Joshua 7:9. This is the boldness for which Luther was remarkable. One who heard him praying said, "What a spirit, what a confidence was in his very expressions. With such a reverence he sued, as one begging of God, and yet with such hope and assurance, as if he spoke with a loving father or friend. This is the boldness which distinguished Bruce, a great Scottish divine of the seventeenth century. His prayers were said to be "like bolts shot up into heaven." Here also I fear we sadly come short. We do not sufficiently realize the believer's privileges. We do not plead as often as we might, "Lord, are we not your own people? Is it not for your glory that we should be sanctified? Is it not for your honor that your gospel should increase?"

I commend to you the importance of fullness in prayer. I do not forget that our Lord warns us against the example of the Pharisees, who, for pretense, made long prayers; and commands us when we pray not to use vain repetitions. But I cannot forget, on the other hand, that he has given his own sanction to large and long devotions by continuing all night in prayer to God. At all events, we are not likely in this day to err on the side of praying too much. Might it not be feared that many believers in this generation pray too little? Is not the actual amount of time that many Christians give to prayer, in the aggregate, very small? I am afraid these questions cannot be answered satisfactorily. I am afraid the private devotions of many are painfully scanty and limited; just enough to prove they are alive and no more. They are really seem to want little from God. They seem to have little to confess, little to ask for, and little to thank him for. Alas, this is altogether wrong. Nothing is more common than to hear believers complaining that they do not get on. They tell us that they do not grow in grace as they could desire. Is it not rather to be suspected that many have quite as much grace as they ask for? Is it not the true account of many, that they have little, because they ask little? The cause of their weakness is to be found in their own stunted, dwarfish, clipped, contracted, hurried, narrow, diminutive prayers. They have not, because they ask not. Oh, we are not straitened in Christ, but in ourselves. The Lord says, "Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it." But we are like the King of Israel who smote on the ground thrice and stayed, when he ought to have smitten five or six times.

I commend to you the importance of particularity in prayer. We ought not to be content with general petitions. We ought to specify our needs before the throne of grace. It should not be enough to confess we are sinners; we should name toe sins of which our conscience tells us we are most guilty. It should not be enough to ask for holiness; we should name the graces in which we fell most deficient. It should not be enough to tell the Lord we are in trouble; we should describe our trouble and all its peculiarities. This is what Jacob did when he feared his brother Esau. He tells God exactly what it is that he fears. Genesis 32:11. This is what Eleazar did, when he sought a wife for his master's son. He spreads before God precisely what he needs. Genesis 24:12. This is what Paul did when he had a thorn in the flesh. He besought the Lord. 2 Corinthians 12:8. This is true faith and confidence. We should believe that nothing is

too small to be named before God. What should we think of the patient who told his doctor he was ill, but never went into particulars? What should we think of the wife who told her husband she was unhappy, but did not specify the cause? What should we think of the child who told their father that they were in trouble, but nothing more? Christ is the true bridegroom of the soul, the true physician of the heart, the real father of all his people. Let us show that we fell this by being unreserved in our communications with Him. Let us hide no secrets from Him. Let us tell Him all our hearts.

I commend to you the importance of intercession in our prayers. We are all selfish by nature, and our selfishness is very apt to stick to us, even when we are converted. There is a tendency in us to think only of our own souls, our own spiritual conflicts, our own progress in religion, and to forget others. Against this tendency we all have need to watch and strive, and not the least in our prayers. We should study to be of a public spirit. We should stir ourselves up to name other names besides our own before the throne of grace. We should try to bear in our hearts the whole world, the heathen, the Jews, the Roman Catholics, the body of true believers, the professing Protestant churches, the country in which we live, the congregation to which we belong, the household in which we sojourn, the friends and relations we are connected with. For each and all of these we should plead. This is the highest charity. They love me best who loves me in their prayers. This is for our soul's health. It enlarges our sympathies and expands our hearts. This is for the benefit of the church. The wheels of all machinery for extending the gospel are moved by prayer. They do as much for the Lord's cause who intercede like Moses on the mount, as they who fight like Joshua in the thick of the battle. This is to be like Christ. He bears the names of his people, as their High Priest, before the Father. Oh, the privilege of being like Jesus! This is to be a true helper to ministers. If I must choose a congregation, give me a people that pray.

I commend to you the importance of thankfulness in prayer. I know well that asking God is one thing and praising God is another. But I see so close a connection between prayer and praise in the Bible, that I dare not call that true prayer in which thankfulness has no part. It is not for nothing that Paul says, "By prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." Philippians 4:6. "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving." Colossians 4:2. It is of mercy that we are not in hell. It is of mercy that we have the hope of heaven. It is of mercy that we live in a land of spiritual light. It is of mercy that we have been called by the Spirit, and not left to reap the fruit of our own ways. It is of mercy that we still live and have opportunities of glorifying God for that free grace by which we live, and for that loving kindness which endures forever. Never was their an eminent saint who was not full of thankfulness. St. Paul hardly ever writes an epistle without beginning with thankfulness. Men like Whitefield in the last century, and Bickersteth in our own time, abounded in thankfulness. Oh, reader, if we would be bright and shining lights in our day, we must cherish a spirit of praise. Let our prayers be thankful prayers.

I commend to you the importance of watchfulness over your prayers. Prayer is the point in religion at which you must be most of all on your guard. Here it is that true religion begins; here it flourishes, and here it decays. Tell me what a peeaons prayers are, and I will soon tell you the state of their soul. Prayer is the spiritual pulse. By this the spiritual health may be tested. Prayer is the spiritual weather-glass. By this we may know whether it is fair or foul with our hearts. Oh, let us keep an eye continually upon our private devotions. Here is the path and marrow of our practical Christianity. Sermons and books and tracts, and committee-meetings and the company of good people are all good in their way, but they will never make up for the neglect of private prayer. Mark well the places and society and companions that unhinge your hearts for communion with God and make your prayers drive heavily. There be on your guard. Observe narrowly what friends and what employment leave your soul in the most spiritual frame, and most ready to speak with God. To these cleave and stick fast. If you will take care of your prayers, nothing shall go very wrong with your soul.

I offer these points for your private consideration. I do it in all humility. I know no one who needs to be reminded of them more than I do myself. But I believe them to be God's own truth, and I desire myself and all I love to feel them more.

I want the times we live in to be praying times. I want the Christians of our day to be praying Christians. I want the church to be a praying church. My Heart's desire and prayer in sending forth this tract is to promote a spirit of prayerfulness. I want those who never prayed yet, to arise and call upon God, and I want those who do pray, to see that they are not praying amiss.

Bible-Reading

by J. C. Ryle (1816-1900)

"Study the Scriptures" (John 5:39).

"How do you read it?" (Luke 10:26).

Next to praying there is nothing so important in practical religion as Bible-reading. God has mercifully given us a book which is "able to make [us] wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 3:15). By reading that book we may learn what to believe, what to be, and what to do; how to live with comfort, and how to die in peace. Happy is that man who possesses a Bible! Happier still is he who reads it! Happiest of all is he who not only reads it, but obeys it, and makes it the rule of his faith and practice!

Nevertheless it is a sorrowful fact that man has a sad ability to abuse God's gifts. His privileges, and power, and abilities, are all ingeniously perverted to other ends than those for which they were bestowed. His speech, his imagination, his intellect, his strength, his time, his influence, his money—instead of being used as instruments for glorifying his Maker—are generally wasted, or employed for his own selfish ends. And just as man naturally makes a bad use of his other mercies from God, so he does of the written Word. One sweeping charge may be brought against the whole of Christendom, and that charge is neglect and abuse of the Bible.

To prove this charge we have no need to look elsewhere: the proof lies at our own doors. I have no doubt that there are more Bibles in our country at this moment than there ever were since the world began. There is more Bible buying—and Bible selling—more Bible printing and Bible distributing—than ever was since we were a nation. We see Bibles in every bookstore, Bibles of every size, price, and style—large Bibles, and small Bibles—Bibles for the rich, and Bibles for the poor. There are Bibles in almost every house in the land. But all this time I fear we are in danger of forgetting, that to "have" the Bible is one thing and to "read" it quite another.

This neglected Book is the subject about which I address the readers of this paper today. Surely it is no small thing what you are doing with the Bible. Surely, when the plague is spreading in other lands, you should search and see whether the plague-spot is on you. Give me your attention while I supply you with a few plain reasons why every one who cares for his soul ought to value the Bible highly, to study it regularly, and to make himself thoroughly acquainted with its contents.

I. In the first place, "there is no book in existence written in such a manner as the Bible."

The Bible is "God-breathed" (2 Timothy 3:16). In this respect it is utterly unlike all other writings. God taught the writers of it what to say. God put into their minds thoughts and ideas. God guided their pens in writing down those thoughts and ideas. When you read it, you are not reading the self-taught compositions of poor imperfect men like yourself, but the words of the eternal God. When you hear it, you are not listening to the erring opinions of short-lived mortals, but to the unchanging mind of the King of kings. The men who were employed to write the Bible did not speak themselves. They "spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:21). All other books in the world, however good and useful in their way, are more or less defective. The more you look at them the more you see their defects and blemishes. The Bible alone is absolutely perfect. From beginning to end it is "the Word of God."

I will not waste time by attempting any long and labored proof of this. I say boldly, that the Book itself is the best witness of its own inspiration. It is the greatest standing miracle in the world. He that dares to say the Bible is not inspired must give an explanation why he believes this, if he can. Let him explain the peculiar nature and character of the Book in a way that will satisfy any man of common sense. The burden of proof seems to my mind to lie on him.

It proves nothing against inspiration, as some have asserted, that the writers of the Bible have each different style. Isaiah does not write like Jeremiah, and Paul does not write like John. This is perfectly true, and yet the works of these men are not a bit less equally inspired. The waters of the sea have many different shades. In one place they look blue, and in another green. And yet the difference is due to the depth or shallowness of the part we see, or to the nature of the bottom. The water in every case is the same salt sea. The breath of a man may produce different sounds according to the character of the instrument on which he plays. The flute, the bagpipe, and the trumpet, have each their peculiar note. And yet the breath that calls forth the notes is in each case one and the same. The light of the planets we see in heaven is extremely various. Mars, and Saturn, and Jupiter, each have a individual color. And yet we know that the light of the sun, which each planet reflects, is in each case one and the same. Just in the same way the books of the Old and New Testaments are all inspired truth, and yet the aspect of that truth varies according to the mind through which the Holy Spirit makes it flow. The handwriting and style of the writers differ enough to prove that each had a distinct individual being; but the Divine Guide who dictates and directs the whole is always one. All are inspired. Every chapter, and verse, and word, is from God.

Oh, that men who are troubled with doubts, and thoughts about inspiration, would calmly examine the Bible for themselves! Oh, that they would take the advice which was the first step to Augustine's conversion, "Pick it up and read it! Pick it up and read it!" How many difficulties and objections would vanish away at once like mist before the rising sun! How many would soon confess, "The finger of God is here! God is in this Book, and I did not know it."

This is the Book about which I address the readers of this paper. Surely it is no light matter "what you are doing with this Book." It is no light thing that God should have caused this Book to be "written to teach us," and that you should have before you "the very words of God" (Romans 3:2; 15:4). I charge you, I summon you to give an honest answer to my questions. What are you doing with the Bible? Do you read it at all? How do you read it?

II. In the second place, "there is no knowledge absolutely needful to a man's salvation, except a knowledge of the things which are to be found in the Bible."

We live in days when the words of Daniel are fulfilled before our eyes: "Many will go here and there to increase knowledge" (Daniel 12:4). Schools are multiplying every where you look. New colleges are set up. Old Universities are reformed and improved. New books are continually coming out. More is being taught—more is being learned—more is being read than there ever was since the world began. It is all good. I rejoice at it. An ignorant population is a perilous and expensive burden to any nation. It is a ready prey to the first who may arise to entice it to do evil. But this I say—we must never forget that all education a man's head can receive will not save his soul from hell, unless he knows the truths of the Bible.

A man "may have immense learning and yet never be saved." He may be master of half the languages spoken around the globe. He may be acquainted with the highest and deepest things in heaven and earth. He may have read books till he is like a walking encyclopedia. He may be familiar with the stars of heaven—the birds of the air—the beasts of the earth, and the fishes of the sea. He may be able, like Solomon, to "describe plant life, from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of walls, and also teach about animals and birds, reptiles and fish" (1 Kings 4:33). He may be able to lecture on all the secrets of fire, air, earth, and water. And yet, if he dies ignorant of Bible truths, he dies a destitute man! Chemistry never silenced a guilty conscience. Mathematics never healed a broken heart. All the sciences in the world never soothed a dying man. No earthly philosophy ever supplied hope in death. No natural theology ever gave peace in the prospect of meeting a holy God. All these things are of the earth and can never raise a man above the earth's level. They may enable a man to strut and fret his little time here on earth with a more dignified manner of walking than his fellow-mortals, but they can never give him wings, and enable him to soar towards heaven. He that has the largest share of them, will find in time that without Bible knowledge he has no lasting possession. Death will make an end of all his attainments, and after death they will do him no good at all.

A man "may be a very ignorant man, and yet be saved." He may be unable to read a word, or write a letter. He may know nothing of geography beyond the bounds of his own city or county, and be utterly unable to say which is nearest to England, Paris or New York. He may know nothing of arithmetic, and not see any difference between a million and a thousand. He may know nothing of history, not even of his own land, and be quite ignorant whether his country is headed up by a Tribal Chief or by Queen Elizabeth. He may know nothing of science and its discoveries—and whether Julius Caesar won his victories with gunpowder, or the apostles had a printing press, or the sun orbits around the earth—may be matters about which he has not an idea. And yet, if that very man has heard Bible truth with his ears and believed it with his heart, he knows enough to save his soul. He will be found in the end with Lazarus in heaven, while his scientific fellow-creature, who has died unconverted, is lost forever.

There is much talk in these days about science and "useful knowledge." But a knowledge of the Bible is the one knowledge that is needful and eternally useful. A man may get to heaven without money, learning, health, or friends, but without Bible knowledge he will never get there at all. A man may have the mightiest of minds, and a memory stored with all that strong mind can grasp—and yet, if he does not know the things of the Bible, his soul is damned forever. Woe! woe! woe to the man who dies in ignorance of the Bible!

This is the Book about which I am addressing the readers of these pages today. It is no light matter "what you do with such a book." It concerns the life of your soul. I summon you, I charge you to give an honest answer to my question. What are you doing with the Bible? Do you read it? How do you read it?

III. In the third place, "no book in existence contains such important matter as the Bible."

Time would fail me if I were to enter fully into all the great things which are to be found in the Bible, and only in the Bible. It is not by any sketch or outline that the treasures of the Bible can be displayed. It would be easy to fill a volume with a list of the exceptional truths it reveals, and yet the half of its riches would be left untold.

How glorious and soul-satisfying is the description it gives us of God's plan of salvation, and the way by which our sins can be forgiven! The coming into the world of Jesus Christ, the God-man, to save sinners—the redemption He has accomplished for man by His suffering, in our place, the just for the unjust—the complete payment He has made for our sins by His own blood—the justification of every sinner who simply believes on Jesus—the readiness of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, to receive, pardon, and save to the uttermost—how unspeakably grand and comforting are all these truths! We would know nothing of them without the Bible.

How comforting is the account it gives us of the great Mediator of the New Testament—the man Christ Jesus! Four times over His picture is graciously drawn before our eyes. Four separate witnesses tell us of His miracles and His ministry—His sayings and His actions—His life and His death—His power and His love—His kindness and His patience—His ways, His words, His works, His thoughts, His heart. Blessed be God, there is one thing in the Bible which the most prejudiced reader can hardly fail to understand, and that is the character of Jesus Christ!

How encouraging are the examples the Bible gives us of good people! It tells us of many who were of like passions with ourselves—men and women who had cares, crosses, families, temptations, afflictions, diseases, like ourselves—and yet "through faith and patience inherited what has been promised," and got safely home (Hebrews 6:12). It keeps back nothing in the history of these people. Their mistakes, their weaknesses, their conflicts, their experience, their prayers, their praises, their useful lives, their happy deaths—all are fully recorded. And it tells us the God and Savior of these men and women is still the same today as yesterday, and still waits to be gracious.

How instructive are the examples the Bible gives us of bad people! It tells us of men and women who had light and knowledge and opportunities like ourselves, and yet hardened their hearts, loved the world, clung to their sins, would have their own way, despised reproof, and ruined their own souls forever. And it warns us that the God who punished Pharaoh, and Saul, and Ahab, and Jezebel, and Judas, is a God who never changes, and that there is a real hell.

How precious are the promises which the Bible contains for the use of those who love God! There is hardly any possible emergency or condition for which it does not have a word of hope and encouragement. And it tells men that God loves to be put in remembrance of these promises, and that if He has said He will do something, His promise will certainly be fulfilled.

How blessed are the hopes which the Bible holds out to the believer in Christ Jesus! Peace in the hour of death—rest and happiness on the other side of the grave—a glorious body in the morning of the resurrection—a full and triumphant acquittal in the day of judgment—an everlasting reward in the kingdom of Christ—a joyful meeting with the Lord's people in the day of gathering together—these, these are the future prospects of every true Christian. They are all written in the book—in the book which is all true.

How striking is the light which the Bible throws on the character of man! It teaches us what men may be expected to be and do in every position and occupation of life. It gives us the deepest insight into the secret springs and motives of human actions, and the ordinary course of events under the control of human agents. It is the true "judge of the thoughts and attitudes of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12). How deep is the wisdom contained in the books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastics! I can correctly understand an old Christian saying, "Give me a candle and a Bible and shut me up in a dark dungeon, and I will tell you everything that the whole world is doing."

All these are things which men could find nowhere except in the Bible. We probably do not have the least idea how little we would know about these things if we did not have the Bible. We hardly know the value of the air we breathe, and the sun which shines on us, because we have never known what it is to be without them. We do not value the truths on which I have been just now dwelling, because we do not realize the darkness of men to whom these truths have not been revealed. Surely no tongue can fully tell the value of the treasures this one volume contains. Well might old John Newton say that some books were copper books in his estimation, some were silver, and a few were gold but the Bible alone was like a book all made up of bank-notes.

This is the Book about which I address the reader of this paper this day. Surely it is no light matter what you are doing with the Bible. It is no light matter in what way you are using this treasure. I charge you, I summon you to give an honest answer to my question—What are you doing with the

Bible? Do you read it? How do you read it?

IV. In the fourth place, "no book in existence has produced such wonderful effects on mankind at large as the Bible."

(a) This is the Book whose doctrines turned the world upside down in the days of the Apostles.

Many centuries have now passed away since God sent forth a few Jews from a remote corner of the earth to do a work which according to man's judgment, must have seemed impossible. He sent them out at a time when the whole world was full of superstition, cruelty, lust, and sin. He sent them out to proclaim that the established religions of the earth were false and useless, and

must be forsaken. He sent them out to persuade men to give up old habits and customs, and to live different lives. He sent them out to do battle with the most perverted idolatry, with the vilest and most disgusting immorality, with a bigoted priesthood, with sneering philosophers, with an ignorant population, with bloody-minded emperors, with the whole influence of Rome. Never was there an enterprise for all appearances more unrealistic and less likely to succeed!

And how did He arm them for this battle? He gave them no worldly weapons. He gave them no worldly power to compel agreement, and no worldly riches to bribe belief. He simply put the Holy Spirit into their hearts, and the Scriptures into their hands. He simply commanded them to expound and explain, to require compliance and to publish the doctrines of the Bible. The preacher of Christianity in the first century was not a man with a sword and an army to frighten people, or a man with a license to be sensual, to allure people, like the priests of the shameful idols of the Hindus. No, he was nothing more than one holy man with one holy book.

And how did these men of one book prosper? In a few generations they entirely changed the face of society by the doctrines of the Bible. They emptied the temples of the heathen gods. They starved out idolatry and left it high and dry like a stranded ship. They brought into the world a higher condition of morality between man and man. They raised the character and position of woman. They altered the standard of purity and decency. They put an end to man's cruel and bloody customs, such as the gladiatorial fights—there was no stopping the change. Persecution and opposition were useless. One victory after another was won. One bad thing after another melted away. Whether men liked it or not, they were slowly affected by the movement of the new religion and drawn within the whirlpool of its power.

The earth shook, and their rotten shelters fell to the ground. The flood rose, and they found themselves obliged to rise with it. The tree of Christianity swelled and grew, and the chains they had thrown around it to arrest its growth, snapped like string. And all this was done by the doctrines of the Bible! Talk about great victories! What are the victories of Alexander, and Caesar, and Napoleon, compared with those I have just mentioned? For magnitude, for completeness, for results, for permanence, there are no victories like the victories of the Bible.

(b) This is the Book which turned Europe upside down in the days of the glorious Protestant Reformation.

No man can read the history of Christendom as it was five hundred years ago, and not see that darkness covered the whole professing Church of Christ, even a darkness that could be felt. So great was the change which had come over Christianity, that if an apostle had risen from the dead he would not have recognized it, and would have thought that heathenism had revived again. The doctrines of the Gospel lay buried under a dense mass of human traditions. Penances, and pilgrimages, and indulgences, relic-worship, and image-worship, and saint-worship, and worship of the Virgin Mary, formed the sum and substance of most people's religion. The Church was made an idol. The priests and ministers of the Church usurped the place of Christ. And by what means was all this miserable darkness cleared away? By simply bringing forth once more the Bible.

It was not merely the preaching of Luther and his friends, which established Protestantism in Germany. The great weapon which overthrew the Roman Catholic Church's power in that country, was Luther's translation of the Bible into the German tongue. It was not merely the writings of English Reformers which threw down Roman Catholicism in England. The seeds of the work carried forward were first sown by Wycliffe's translation of the Bible many years before. It was not merely the quarrel of Henry VIII and the Pope of Rome, which loosened the Pope's hold on English minds. It was the royal permission to have the Bible translated and set up in churches, so that every one who wanted might read it. Yes! it was the reading, and circulation of the Scripture which mainly established the cause of Protestantism in England, in Germany, and Switzerland. Without it the people would probably have returned to their former bondage when the first reformers died. But by the reading of the Bible the public mind became gradually leavened with the principles of true religion. Men's eyes became thoroughly open. Their spiritual understandings became thoroughly enlarged. The abominations of Roman Catholicism became distinctly visible. The excellence of the pure Gospel became a rooted idea in their hearts. It was then in vain for Popes to thunder forth excommunications. It was useless for Kings and Queens to attempt to stop the course of Protestantism by fire and sword. It was all too late. The people knew too much. They had seen the light. They had heard the joyful sound. They had tasted the truth. The sun had risen on their minds. The scales had fallen from their eyes. The Bible had done its appointed work within them, and that work was not to be overthrown. The people would not return to Egypt. The clock could not be pushed back again. A mental and moral revolution had been effected, and mainly effected by God's Word. Those are the true revolutions which the Bible effects. What are all the revolutions which France and England have gone through, compared to these? No revolutions are so bloodless, none so satisfactory, none so rich in lasting results, as the revolutions accomplished by the Bible!

This is the book upon which the well-being of nations has always hinged, and with which the best interests of everyone in Christendom at this moment are inseparably tied. By the same proportion that the Bible is honored or not, light or darkness, morality or immorality, true religion or superstition, liberty or tyranny, good laws or bad, will be found in a nation. Come with me and open the pages of history, and you will read the proofs in times past.

Read it in the history of Israel under the Kings. How great was the wickedness that then prevailed! But who can wonder? The law of the Lord had been completely lost sight of, and was found in the days of Josiah thrown aside in a corner of the temple. (2 Kings 22:8). Read it in the history of the Jews in our Lord Jesus Christ's time. How awful the picture of Scribes and Pharisees, and their religion! But who can wonder? The Scripture was "nullified for the sake of man's tradition" (Matthew 15:6). Read it in the history of the Church of Christ in the middle ages. What can be worse than the accounts we have of its ignorance and superstition? But who can wonder? The times were very dark, when men did not have the light of the Bible.

This is the Book to which the civilized world is indebted for many of its best and most praiseworthy institutions. Few probably are aware how many good things that men have adopted for the public benefit, of which the origin may be clearly traced to the Bible. It has left lasting marks wherever it has been received. From the Bible are drawn many of the best laws by which society is kept in order. From the Bible has been obtained the standard of morality about truth, honesty, and the relations of man and wife, which prevails among Christian nations, and which—however feebly respected in many cases—makes so great a difference between Christians and heathen. To the Bible we are indebted for that most merciful provision for the poor working man, the Lord's Day of rest—Sunday. To the influence of the Bible we owe nearly every humane and charitable institution in existence. The sick, the poor, the aged, the orphan, the insane, the retarded, the blind, were seldom or never thought of before the Bible influenced the world. You may search in vain for any record of institutions for their aid in the histories of Athens or of Rome. Yes! there are many who sneer at the Bible, and

say the world would get on well enough without it, who don't think how great are their own obligations to the Bible. Little does the unbeliever think, as he lies sick in some of our great hospitals, that he owes all his present comforts to the very book he despises. Had it not been for the Bible, he might have died in misery, uncared for, unnoticed and alone. Truly the world we live in is unconscious of its debts. The day of judgment, I believe, will reveal the full amount of benefit conferred upon mankind by the Bible.

This wonderful book is the subject about which I address the reader of this paper this day. Surely it is no light matter what you are doing with the Bible. The swords of conquering Generals—the ship in which Nelson led the fleets of England to victory—the hydraulic press which raised the tubular bridge at the Menai; each and every of these are objects of interest as instruments of great power. The Book I speak of this day is an instrument a thousand-fold mightier still. Surely it is no light matter whether you are paying it the attention it deserves. I charge you, I summon you to give me an honest answer this day—What are you doing with the Bible? Do you read it? How do you read it?

V. In the fifth place, "no book in existence can do so much for every one who reads it with an open heart, as the Bible."

The Bible does not profess to teach the wisdom of this world. It was not written to explain geology or astronomy. It will neither instruct you in mathematics, nor in natural philosophy. It will not make you a doctor, or a lawyer, or an engineer.

But there is another world to be thought of besides that world in which man now lives. There are other ends for which man was created, besides making money and working. There are other interests which he is meant to attend to, besides those of his body, and those interests are the interests of his soul. It is the interests of the immortal soul which the Bible is especially able to promote. If you want to know law, you may study Blackstone or Sugden. If you would know astronomy or geology, you may study Herschel and Lyell. But if you would know how to have your soul saved, you must study the written Word of God.

The Bible is "able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 3:15). It can show you the way which leads to heaven. It can teach you everything you need to know, point out everything you need to believe, and explain everything you need to do. It can show you what you are—a sinner. It can show you what God is—perfectly holy. It can show you the great giver of pardon, peace, and grace—Jesus Christ. I have read of an Englishman who visited Scotland in the days of Blair, Rutherford, and Dickson, three famous preachers, and heard all three in succession. He said that the first showed him the majesty of God—the second showed him the beauty of Christ—and the third showed him everything in his heart. It is the glory and beauty of the Bible that it is always teaching these three things more or less, from the first chapter of it to the last.

The Bible applied to the heart by the Holy Spirit, "is the grand instrument by which souls are first converted to God." That mighty change is generally begun by some text or doctrine of the Word, brought home to a man's conscience. In this way the Bible has worked moral miracles by the thousands. It has made drunkards become sober—immoral people become pure—thieves become honest and violent-tempered people become meek. It has wholly altered the course of men's lives. It has caused their old things to pass away, and made all their ways new. It has taught worldly people to seek first the kingdom of God. It has taught lovers of pleasure to become lovers of God. It has taught the stream of men's affections to run upwards instead of running downwards. It has made men think of heaven, instead of always thinking of earth, and live by faith, instead of living by sight. It has done all this in every part of the world. It is still all being accomplished. What are the Roman Catholic miracles which weak men believe, compared to all this, even if they were true? Those are the truly great miracles which are constantly being worked by the Word.

The Bible applied to the heart by the Holy Spirit, is "the chief means by which men are built up and strengthened in the faith," after their conversion. It is able to make them pure, to sanctify them, to train them in righteousness, and to thoroughly equip them for every good work. (Psalm 119:9; John 17:17; 2 Timothy 3:16-17). The Spirit ordinarily does these things by the written Word; sometimes by the Word read, and sometimes by the Word preached, but seldom, if ever, without the Word. The Bible can show a believer how to walk in this world so as to please God. It can teach him how to glorify Christ in all the relationships of life, and can make him a good leader, employee, subordinate, husband, father, or son. It can enable him to bear misfortunes and loss without murmuring, and say, "It is well." It can enable him to look down into the grave, and say, "I will fear no evil" (Psalm 23:4). It can enable him to think about judgment and eternity, and not feel afraid. It can enable him to bear persecution without flinching and to give up liberty and life rather than deny Christ's truth.

Is he weary in soul? It can awaken him.

Is he mourning? It can comfort him.

Is he erring? It can restore him.

Is he weak? It can make him strong.

Is he in the company of the unbeliever? It can keep him from evil.

Is he alone? It can talk with him. (Psalm 6:22).

All this the Bible can do for all believers—for the least as well as the greatest—for the richest as well as the poorest. It has done it for thousands already, and is doing it for thousands every day.

The man who has the Bible, and the Holy Spirit in his heart, has everything which is absolutely necessary to make him spiritually wise. He needs no priest to break the bread of life for him. He needs no ancient traditions, no writings of the Fathers, no voice of the Church, to guide him into all truth. He has the well of truth open before him, and what more can he want? Yes! though he be shut up alone in a prison, or cast on a desert island—though he never sees a church, or minister again—if he only has the Bible, he has got the infallible guide, and needs no other. If he only has the will to read that Bible properly, it will certainly teach him the road that leads to heaven. It is here alone that infallibility resides. It is not in the Church. It is not in the Councils. It is not in ministers. It is only in the written Word.

(a) I know well that many say they have found no saving power in the Bible.

They tell us they have tried to read it, and have learned nothing from it. They can see in it nothing but burdensome and abstract things. They ask us what we mean by talking of its power.

I answer, that the Bible no doubt contains some difficult things, or else it would not be the book of God. It contains things hard to comprehend, but only hard because we do not have the understanding of mind to comprehend them. It contains things above our reasoning powers, but nothing that might not be explained if the eyes of our understanding were not feeble and dim. But is not an acknowledgment of our own ignorance the very cornerstone and foundation of all knowledge? Must not many things be taken for granted in the beginning of every science, before we can proceed one step towards acquaintance with it? Do we not require our children to learn many things of which they cannot see the meaning at first? And ought we not then to expect to find "deep things" when we begin studying the Word of God, and yet to believe that if we persevere in reading it the meaning of many of them will one day be made clear? No doubt we ought so to expect, and so to believe. We must read with humility. We must take much on trust. We must believe that what we don't know now, we will know later, some part in this world, and all in the world to come.

But I ask that man who has given up reading the Bible because it contains hard things, whether he did not find many things in it easy and plain? I put it to his conscience whether he did not see great landmarks and principles in it all the way through? I ask him whether the things needful to salvation did not stand out boldly before his eyes, like lighthouses. What should we think of the captain of a steamer who came, at night, into the entrance of the Channel, and claimed that he did not know every parish, and village, and creek, along the British coast? Should we not think him a lazy coward, when the lights on the Lizard, and Eddystone, and the Start, and Portland, and St. Catherine's, and Beachy Head, and Dungeness, and the Forelands, were shining forth like so many lamps, to guide him up to the river? Should we not say, Why did you not steer by the great leading lights? And what should we to say to the man who gives up reading the Bible because it contains hard things, when his own state, and the path to heaven, and the way to serve God, are all written down clearly and unmistakably, as with a sunbeam? Surely we ought to tell that man that his objections are no better than lazy excuses, and do not deserve to be heard.

(b) I know well that many raise the objection, that thousands read the Bible and are not a bit the better for their reading.

And they ask us, when this is the case, what becomes of the Bible's boasted power?

I answer, that the reason why so many read the Bible without any benefit is plain and simple—they do not read it in the right way. There is generally a right way and a wrong way of doing everything in the world; and just as it is with other things, so it is in the matter of reading the Bible. The Bible is not so entirely different from all other books as to make it of no importance in what spirit and manner you read it. It does not do any good, as a matter of course, by merely running our eyes over the print, any more than Baptism and the Lord's Supper do any good by the mere virtue of our receiving them. It does not ordinarily do any good, unless it is read with humility and earnest prayer. The best engine that was ever built is useless if a man does not know how to operate it. The best sundial that was ever constructed will not tell its owner the time of day if he is so ignorant as to put it in the shade. Just as it is with that engine, and that sundial, so it is with the Bible. When men read it without benefit, "the fault is not in the Book, but in themselves."

I tell the man who doubts the power of the Bible, because many read it, and are no better for the reading, that the abuse of a thing is no argument against the use of it. I tell him boldly, that never did man or woman read that book in a childlike persevering spirit—like the Ethiopian eunuch, and the Bereans (Acts 8:28; 17:11), and miss the way to heaven. Yes, many will be exposed to shame in the day of judgment; but there will not rise up one soul who will be able to say, that he went thirsting to the Bible, and found in it no living water—he searched for truth in the Scriptures, and searching did not find it. The words which are spoken of Wisdom in the Proverbs are strictly true of the Bible: "If you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God" (Proverbs 2:3-5).

This wonderful Book is the subject about which I address the readers of this paper this day. Surely it is no light matter "what you are doing with the Bible." What should you think of the man who in time of cholera despised a sure prescription for preserving the health of his body? What must be thought of you if you despise the only sure prescription for the everlasting health of your soul? I charge you, I entreat you, to give an honest answer to my question. What do you do with the Bible? Do you read it? How do you read it?

VI. In the sixth place, "the Bible is the only standard by which all questions of doctrine or of duty can be tested."

The Lord God knows the weakness and infirmities of our poor fallen understandings. He knows that, even after conversion, our perceptions of right and wrong are extremely vague. He knows how artfully Satan can overlay error with an appearance of truth, and can dress up wrong with plausible arguments, till it looks like right. Knowing all this, He has mercifully provided us with an unerring standard of truth and error, right and wrong, and has taken care to make that standard a written book—the Scripture.

No one can look around the world, and not see the wisdom of such a provision. No one can live long, and not find out that he is constantly in need of a counselor and adviser—of a rule of faith and practice, on which he can depend. Unless he lives like a beast, without a soul and conscience, he will find himself constantly assailed by difficult and puzzling questions. He will be often asking himself, What must I believe? and what must I do?

(a) The world is full of difficulties about points of doctrine. The house of error lies close alongside the house of truth. The door of one is so like the door of the other that there is continual risk of mistakes.

Does a man read or travel much? He will soon find the most opposite opinions prevailing among those who are called Christians. He will discover that different persons give the most different answers to the important question, What must I do to be saved? The Roman Catholic, the Protestant, and the Mormon each will assert that he alone has the truth. Each will tell him that safety is only to be found in his party. Each says, "Come with us." All this is puzzling. What will a man do?

Does he settle down quietly in some church here at home? He will soon find that even in our own land the most conflicting views are held. He will soon discover that there are serious differences among Christians as to the comparative importance of the various parts and articles of the faith. One man thinks of nothing but Church government—another of nothing but sacraments, services, and forms

—a third of nothing but preaching the Gospel. Does he apply to ministers for a solution? He will perhaps find one minister teaching one doctrine, and another another. All this is puzzling. What will a man do?

There is only one answer to this question. A man must make the Bible alone his rule. He must receive nothing and believe nothing which is not according to the Word. He must try all religious teaching by one simple test—Does it square with the Bible? What does the Scripture say?

I pray to God that the eyes of the Christians of this country were more open on this subject. I pray to God that they would learn to weigh sermons, books, opinions, and ministers, in the scales of the Bible, and to value all according to their conformity to the Word. I pray to God that they would see that it matters little who says a thing. The question is—Is the thing said Scriptural? If it is, it ought to be received and believed. If it is not, it ought to be refused and cast aside. I fear the consequences of that submissive acceptance of everything which "the preacher" says, which is so common among many Christians. I fear lest they be led where they know not where, like the blinded Syrians, and awake some day to find themselves in the power of Rome. (2 Kings 6:20). Oh, that men would only remember for what purpose the Bible was given to them!

I tell Christians that it is nonsense to say, as some do, that it is arrogant to judge a minister's teaching by the Word. When one doctrine is proclaimed in one church, and another in another, people must read and judge for themselves. Both doctrines cannot be right, and both ought to be tried by the Word. I charge them, above all things, never to suppose that any true minister of the Gospel will dislike his people measuring all he teaches by the Bible. On the contrary, the more they read the Bible, and prove all he says by the Bible, the better he will be pleased. A false minister may say, "You have no right to use your private judgment: leave the Bible to us who are ordained." A true minister will say "Search the Scriptures, and if I do not teach you what is Scriptural, do not believe me." A false minister may cry, "Listen to the Church," and "Listen to me." A true minister will say, "Listen to the Word of God."

(b) But the world is not only full of difficulties about points of doctrine, it is equally full of difficulties about points of "practice."

Every professing Christian, who wishes to act conscientiously, must know that it is so. The most puzzling questions are continually arising. He is tried on every side by doubts as to the line of duty, and can often hardly see what is the right thing to do.

He is tried by questions connected with the management of his "worldly calling," if he is in business or in trade. He sometimes sees things going on that are of a very doubtful character—things that can hardly be called fair, straightforward, truthful, and things that you would not want done to you. But then everybody in business does these things. They have always been done in the most respectable houses. There would be no carrying on of a profitable business if they were not done. They are not things distinctly named and prohibited by God. All this is very puzzling. What is a man to do?

He is tried by questions about worldly amusements. Horse Races, and balls, and operas, and theaters, and card parties, are all very doubtful methods of spending time. But then he sees numbers of great people taking part in them. Are all these people wrong? Can there really be such mighty harm in these things? All this is very puzzling. What is a man to do?

He is tried by questions about the education of his children. He wishes to train them up morally and religiously, and to remember their souls. But he is told by many sensible people, that young persons will be young—that it is not right to check and restrain them too much, and that he ought to attend shows, and children's parties, and give children's balls himself. He is informed that this noble person, or that lady of rank, always does so, and yet they are considered religious people. Surely it cannot be wrong. All this is very puzzling. What is he to do?

There is only one answer to all these questions. A man must make the Bible his rule of conduct. He must make its leading principles the compass by which he steers his course through life. By the letter or spirit of the Bible he must test every difficult point and question. "To the law and to the testimony! What does the Scripture say?" He ought to care nothing for what other people may think right. He ought not to set his watch by the clock of his neighbor, but by the watch of the Word.

I charge my readers solemnly to act on the maxim I have just laid down, and to adhere to it rigidly all the days of their lives. You will never repent of it. Make it a leading principle never to act contrary to the Word. Do not care for the charge of being overly strict, and a person of needless precision. Remember you serve a strict and holy God. Do not listen to the common objection that the rule you have laid down is impossible, and cannot be observed in such a world as this. Let those who make such an objection speak out plainly, and tell us for what purpose the Bible was given to man. Let them remember that by the Bible we will all be judged at the last day, and let them learn to judge themselves by it here, lest they be judged and condemned by it on Judgment Day.

This mighty rule of faith and practice is the book about which I am addressing the readers of this paper this day. Surely it is no light matter "what you are doing with the Bible." Surely when danger is near on the right hand and on the left, you should consider what you are doing with the safeguard which God has provided. I charge you, I beg you, to give an honest answer to my question. What are you doing with the Bible? Do you read it? How do you read it?

VII. In the seventh place, "the Bible is the book which all true servants of God have always lived by and loved."

Every living thing which God creates requires food. The life that God imparts needs sustaining and nourishing. It is true with animal and vegetable life—with birds, beasts, fishes, reptiles, insects, and plants. It is equally true with spiritual life. When the Holy Spirit raises a man from the death of sin and makes him a new creature in Christ Jesus, the new principle in that man's heart requires food, and the only food which will sustain it is the Word of God.

There never was a man or woman truly converted, from one end of the world to the other, who did not love the revealed will of God. Just as a child born into the world naturally desires the milk provided for its nourishment, so does a soul "born again" desire the sincere milk of the Word. This is a common mark of all the children of God—they "delight in the law of the LORD" (Psalm 1:2).

Show me a person who despises Bible reading, or thinks little of Bible preaching, and I hold it to be a certain fact that he is not yet "born again." He may be zealous about forms and ceremonies. He may be diligent in attending church and the taking of the Lord's

Supper. But if these things are more precious to him than the Bible, I cannot believe that he is a converted man. Tell me what the Bible is to a man and I will generally tell you what he is. This is the pulse to try—this is the barometer to look at—if we would know the state of the heart. I have no notion of the Spirit dwelling in a man and not giving clear evidence of His presence. And I believe it to be clear evidence of the Spirit's presence when the Word is really precious to a man's soul.

Love of the Word is one of the characteristics we see in Job. Little as we know of this Patriarch and his age this, at least, stands out clearly. He says, "I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my daily bread" (Job 23:12).

Love of the Word is a shining feature in the character of David. Note how it appears all through that wonderful part of Scripture, the 119th Psalm. He might well have said, "Oh, how I love your law!" (Psalm 119:97).

Love of the Word is a striking point in the character of Paul. What were he and his companions but men mighty in the Scriptures? What were his sermons but expositions and applications of the Word?

Love of the Word appears preeminently in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He read it publicly. He quoted it continually. He expounded it frequently. He advised the Jews to "search" it. He used it as His weapon to resist the devil. He said repeatedly, "The Scripture must be fulfilled." Almost the last thing He did was to "open their minds [Disciples] so they could understand the Scriptures" (Luke 24:45). I am afraid that man cannot be a true servant of Christ, who has not something of his Master's mind and feeling towards the Bible.

Love of the Word has been a prominent feature in the history of all the saints, of whom we know anything, since the days of the Apostles. This is the lamp which Athanasius and Chrysostom and Augustine followed. This is the compass which kept the Vallenses and Albigenses from making shipwreck of the faith. This is the well which was reopened by Wycliffe and Luther, after it had been long stopped up. This is the sword with which Latimer, and Jewell, and Knox won their victories. This is the manna which fed Baxter and Owen, and the noble host of the Puritans, and made them strong in battle. This is the armory from which Whitefield and Wesley drew their powerful weapons. This is the mine from which Bickersteth and M'Cheyne brought forth rich gold.

Differing as these holy men did in some matters, on one point they were all agreed—they all delighted in the Word.

Love of the Word is one of the first things that appears in the converted heathen, at the various Missionary stations throughout the world. In hot climates and in cold—among savage people and among civilized—in New Zealand, in the South Sea Islands, in Africa, in Hindostan—it is always the same. They enjoy hearing it read. They long to be able to read it themselves. They wonder why Christians did not send it to them before. How striking is the picture which Moffat draws of Africaner, the fierce South African chieftain, when first brought under the power of the Gospel! "Often have I seen him," he says, under the shadow of a great rock nearly the whole day, eagerly perusing the pages of the Bible." How touching is the expression of a poor converted Black, speaking of the Bible! He said, "It is never old and never cold." How affecting was the language of another old Black man, when some would have discourage him from learning to read, because of his old age. "No!" he said, "I will never give it up till I die. It is worth all the labor to be able to read that one verse, "God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

Love of the Bible is one of the grand points of agreement among all converted men and women in our own land. People from many Evangelical denominations all unite in honoring the Bible, as soon as they are real Christians. This is the manna which all the tribes of our new Israel feed upon, and find satisfying food. This is the fountain around which all the various portions of Christ's flock meet together, and from which no sheep goes away thirsty.

Oh, that believers in this country would learn to cleave more closely to the written Word! Oh, that they would see that the more the Bible, and the Bible only, is the substance of men's religion, the more they agree! It is probable there never was an uninspired book more universally admired than

Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress." It is a book which all denominations of Christians delight to honor. It has won praise from all parties. Now what a striking fact it is, that the author was preeminently a man of one book! He had read hardly anything but the Bible.

It is a blessed thought that there will be "many people" in heaven in the end. Few as the Lord's people undoubtedly are at any one given time or place, yet all gathered together in the end, they will be "a great multitude that no one could count" (Revelation 7:9; 19:1). They will be of one heart and mind. They will have passed through the same experience. They will all have repented, believed, lived holy, prayerful, and humble lives. They will all have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. But one thing besides all this they will have in common: they will all love the texts and doctrines of the Bible. The Bible will have been their food and delight in the days of their pilgrimage on earth. And the Bible will be a common subject of joyful meditation and retrospect, when they are gathered together in heaven.

This Book, which all true Christians live upon and love, is the subject about which I am addressing the readers of this paper this day. Surely it is no light matter what you are doing with the Bible. Surely it is matter for serious inquiry, whether you know anything of this love of the Word, and have this mark of following "in the tracks of the sheep" (Song of Solomon 1:8). I charge you, I entreat you to give me an honest answer. What are you doing with the Bible? Do you read it? How do you read it?

VIII. In the last place, "the Bible is the only book which can comfort a man in the last hours of his life."

Death is an event which in all probability is before us all. There is no avoiding it. It is the river which each of us must cross. I who write, and you who read, have to die one day. It is good to remember this. We are all sadly apt to put away the subject from us. "Each man thinks each man mortal but himself." I want everyone to do his duty in life, but I also want everyone to think of death. I want everyone to know how to live but I also want everyone to know how to die.

Death is a solemn event to everyone. It is the winding up of all earthly plans and expectations. It is a separation from all we have loved and live with. It is often accompanied by much bodily pain and distress. It brings us to the grave, the maggot, and corruption. It opens the door to judgment and eternity—to heaven or to hell. It is an event after which there is no change, or space for repentance.

Other mistakes may be corrected or retrieved, but not a mistake on our death beds. As the tree falls, there it must lie. No conversion in the coffin! No new birth after we have ceased to breathe! And death is before us all. It may be close at hand. The time of our departure is quite uncertain. But sooner or later we must each lie down alone and die. All these are serious considerations.

Death is a solemn event even to the believer in Christ. For him no doubt the "sting of death" is taken away. (1 Corinthians 15:55). Death has become one of his privileges, for he is Christ's Living or dying, he is the Lord's. If he lives, Christ lives in him; and if he dies, he goes to live with Christ. To him, "to live is Christ and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21). Death frees him from many trials—from a weak body, a corrupt heart, a tempting devil, and an ensnaring or persecuting world. Death admits him to the enjoyment of many blessings. He rests from his labors—the hope of a joyful resurrection is changed into a certainty: he has the company of holy redeemed spirits—he is "with Christ." All this is true, and yet, even to a believer, death is a solemn thing. Flesh and blood naturally shrink from it. To part from all we love, is a strain and trial to the feelings. The world we go to is a world unknown, even though it is our home. Friendly and harmless as death is to a believer, it is not an event to be treated lightly. It must always be a very solemn thing.

It is good for every thoughtful and sensible man to consider calmly how he is going to meet death. Be strong, like a man, and look the subject in the face. Listen to me while I tell you a few things about the end to which we are coming to.

The good things of the world cannot comfort a man when he draws near death. All the gold of California and Australia will not provide light for the dark valley of death. Money can buy the best medical advice and attendance for a man's body; but money cannot buy peace for his conscience, heart, and soul.

Relatives, lovers, friends and coworkers cannot comfort a man when he draws near death. They may minister affectionately to his bodily wants. They may watch by his bedside tenderly, and anticipate his every wish. They may smooth down his dying pillow, and support his sinking frame in their arms. But they cannot "minister to a mind diseased." They cannot stop the achings of a troubled heart. They cannot screen an uneasy conscience from the eye of God.

The pleasures of the world cannot comfort a man when he draws near death. The brilliant ballroom—the merry dance—the midnight frolic-the party at the races—the card table—the box at the opera—the voices of singing men and singing women—all these are finally distasteful things. To hear of hunting and shooting engagements gives him no pleasure. To be invited to feasts, and regattas, and fancy fairs, gives him no ease. He cannot hide from himself that these are hollow, empty, powerless things. They are noise to the ear of his conscience. They are out of harmony with his condition. They cannot stop one gap in his heart, when the last enemy is coming in like a flood. They cannot make him calm in the prospect of meeting a holy God.

Books and newspapers cannot comfort a man when he draws near death. The most brilliant writings of Dickens will be gloom to his ear. The most able article in the Times will fail to interest him. The Edinburgh and Quarterly Reviews will give him no pleasure. The Illustrated News, and the latest new novel, will lie unopened and unheeded. Their time will be past. Their calling will be gone. Whatever they may be in health, they are useless in the hour of death.

There is but one fountain of comfort for a man drawing near to his end, and that is the Bible. Chapters out of the Bible—texts out of the Bible—statements of truth taken out of the Bible—books containing matter drawn from the Bible—these are a man's only chance of comfort when he comes to die. I do not say that the Bible will do good, as a matter of course, to a dying man, if he has not valued it before. I know, unhappily, too much of death-beds to say that. I do not say whether it is probable that he who has been unbelieving and neglectful of the Bible in life, will at once believe and get comfort from it in death. But I do say positively, that no dying man will ever get real comfort, except from the contents of the Word of God. All comfort from any other source is a house built upon sand.

I lay this down as a rule of universal application. I make no exception in favor of any class on earth. Kings and poor men, learned and unlearned—all are equal in this matter. There is not a bit of real consolation for any dying man, unless he gets it from the Bible. Chapters, passages, texts, promises, and doctrines of Scripture heard, received, believed, and rested on—these are the only comforters I dare promise to any one, when he leaves the world. Taking communion will do a man no more good than the Roman Catholic sacrament of "extreme unction," so long as the Word is not received and believed. The Roman Catholic Priest's absolution will no more ease the conscience than the incantations of a heathen magician, if the poor dying sinner does not receive and believe Bible truth. I tell everyone who reads this paper, that although men may seem to get on comfortably without the Bible while they live, they may be sure that without the Bible they cannot comfortably die. It was a true confession of the learned Selden, "There is no book upon which we can rest in a dying moment but the Bible."

I might easily confirm all I have just said, by examples and illustrations. I might show you the deathbeds of men who have despised the Bible. I might tell you how Voltaire and Paine, the famous atheists died in misery, bitterness, rage, fear, and despair. I might show you the happy deathbeds of those who have loved the Bible and believed it, and the blessed effect the sight of their deathbeds had on others. Cecil, a minister whose praise ought to be in all churches, says, "I will never forget standing by the bedside of my dying mother. 'Are you afraid to die?' I asked. 'No!' she replied. 'But why does the uncertainty of another state give you no concern?' 'Because God has said, When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you'" (Isaiah 43:2). I might easily multiply illustrations of this kind. But I think it better to conclude this part of my subject by giving the result of my own observations as a minister.

I have seen many dying persons in my time. I have seen great varieties of character and behavior among them. I have seen some die bad-tempered, silent, and comfortless. I have seen others die ignorant, unconcerned, and apparently without much fear. I have seen some die so wearied out with a long illness that they were quite willing to depart, and yet they did not seem to me at all in a fit state to go before God. I have seen others die with professions of hope and trust in God, without leaving satisfactory evidences that they were on the rock. I have seen others die who, I believe, were "in Christ," and safe, and yet they never seemed to enjoy much tangible comfort. I have a few dying in the full assurance of hope, and like Bunyan's "Standfast," giving glorious testimony to Christ's faithfulness, even in the river. But one thing I have never seen. I never saw anyone enjoy what I would call real, solid, calm, reasonable peace on his deathbed, who did not draw his peace from the Bible. And this I am bold to say, that the man who thinks to go to his deathbed without having the Bible for his comforter, his companion, and his friend, is one of the greatest madmen in the world. There are no comforts for the soul but Bible comforts, and he who does not have a hold of these, does not have a hold of anything at all, unless it be a broken reed.

The only comforter for a deathbed is the book about which I address the readers of this paper this day. Surely it is no light matter whether you read that book or not. Surely a dying man, in a dying world, should seriously consider whether he has got anything to comfort him when his turn comes to die. I charge you, I entreat you, for the last time, to give an honest answer to my question. What are you doing with the Bible? Do you read it? How do you read it?

I have now given the reasons why I press on every reader the duty and importance of reading the Bible. I have shown that no book is written in such a manner as the Bible,

—that knowledge of the Bible is absolutely necessary to salvation

—that no book contains such matter

—that no book has done so much for the world generally

—that no book can do so much for every one who reads it

—that this Book is the only rule of faith and practice

—that it is, and always has been, the food of all true servants of God

—and that it is the only Book which can comfort men when they die.

All these are ancient things. I do not pretend to tell anything new. I have only gathered together old truths, and tried to mold them into a new shape. Let me finish everything by addressing a few plain words to the conscience of every group of readers.

(1) This paper may fall into the hands of some who "can read, but never do read the Bible at all."

Are you one of them? If you are, I have something to say to you. I cannot comfort you in your present state of mind. It would be mockery and deceit to do so. I cannot speak to you of peace and heaven, while you treat the Bible as you do. You are in danger of losing your soul.

You are in danger, because "your neglected Bible is plain evidence that you do not love God." The health of a man's body may generally be known by his appetite. The health of a man's soul may be known by his treatment of the Bible. Now you are manifestly living with a serious disease. Will you not repent?

I know I cannot reach your heart. I cannot make you see and feel these things. I can only enter my solemn protest against your present treatment of the Bible, and lay that protest before your conscience. I do so with all my soul. Oh, beware lest you repent too late! Beware lest you put off reading the Bible till you send for the doctor in your last illness, and then find the Bible a sealed book, and dark, as the cloud between the hosts of Israel and Egypt, to your anxious soul! Beware lest you go on saying all your life, "Men get along very well without all this Bible-reading" and find in time, to your cost, that men without the Bible do very poorly, and end up in hell! Beware lest the day come when you will feel, "Had I but honored the Bible as much as I have honored the newspaper, I should not have been left without comfort in my last hours! "Bible neglecting reader, I give you a plain warning. Judgment is outside your door ready to come in and destroy you. The Lord have mercy upon your soul!

(2) This paper may fall into the hands of someone who is "willing to begin reading the Bible, but wants advice on how to begin."

Are you that man? Listen to me, and I will give a few short hints.

(a) For one thing, "begin reading your Bible this very day."

The way to do a thing is to do it, and the way to read the Bible is actually to read it. It is not meaning, or wishing, or resolving, or intending, or thinking about it, which will not advance you one step. You must positively read. There is no royal road in this matter, any more than in the matter of prayer. If you cannot read yourself, you must persuade somebody else to read to you. But one way or another, through eyes or ears, the words of Scripture must actually pass before your mind.

(b) For another thing "read the Bible with an earnest desire to understand it."

Do not think for a moment that the great object is to turn over a certain quantity of printed paper, and that it matters nothing whether you understand it or not. Some ignorant people seem to fancy that all is done if they read so many chapters every day, though they may not have an idea what they are all about, and only know that they have pushed on their bookmark so many pages. This is turning Bible-reading into a mere form. It is almost as bad as the Roman catholic habit of buying indulgences, by saying an almost incredible number of "Hail Mary's" and "Our Fathers." Settle it in your mind as a general principle, that a Bible not understood is a Bible that does no good. Say to yourself often as you read, "What is all this about?" Dig for the meaning like an man digging for gold. Work hard, and do not give up the work in a hurry.

(c) For another thing, "read the Bible with childlike faith and humility."

Open your heart as you open your book, and say, "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening." Resolve to believe implicitly whatever you find there, however much it may run counter to your own prejudices. Resolve to receive heartily every statement of truth, whether you like it or not.

Beware of that miserable habit of mind into which some readers of the Bible fall. They receive some doctrines because they like them: they reject others because they are condemning to themselves, or to some lover, or relation, or friend. At this rate the Bible is useless. Are we to be judges of what ought to be in the Word? Do we know better than God? Settle it in your mind that you will receive everything and believe everything, and that what you cannot understand you will take on trust. Remember, when you pray, you are speaking to God and God hears you. But, remember, when you read, God is speaking to you, and you are not to "talk back" but to

listen.

(d) For another thing, "read the Bible in a spirit of obedience and self-application.

Sit down to the study it with a daily determination that "you" will live by it rules, rest on its statements, and act on its commands. Consider, as you travel through every chapter, "How does this affect "my"- view and course of conduct? What does this teach "me?" It is improper to read the Bible from mere curiosity, and for speculative purposes, in order to fill your head and your mind with opinions, while you do not allow the book to influence your heart and life. That Bible is read best which is put into practice in our daily lives.

(e) For another thing, "read the Bible every day."

Make it a part of every day's business to read and meditate on some portion of God's Word. Private means of grace are just as needful every day for our souls as food and clothing are for our bodies. Yesterday's meal will not feed the worker today, and today's meal will not feed the worker tomorrow. Do as the Israelites did in the wilderness. Gather your manna fresh every morning. Choose your own periods and hours. Do not hurry your reading. Give your Bible the best and not the worst part of your time. But whatever plan you pursue, let it be a rule of your life to visit the throne of grace and the Bible every day.

(f) For another thing, "read all the Bible, and read it in an orderly way."

I fear there are many parts of the Word which some people never read at all. This is a very arrogant habit. "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching" (2 Timothy 3:16). To this habit may be traced that want of broad, well-proportioned views of truth, which is so common in this day. Some people's Bible-reading is a system of perpetual dipping and picking. They do not seem to have an idea of regularly going through the whole book. This is also a great mistake. No doubt in times of sickness and affliction it is allowable to search out seasonable portions. But this exception, I believe it is by far the best plan to begin the Old and New Testaments at the same time, to read each straight through to the end, and then begin again. This is a matter in which everyone must be persuaded in his own mind. I can only say it has been my own plan for nearly forty years, and I have never seen cause to alter it.

(g) For another thing, "read the Bible fairly and honestly."

Determine to take everything in its plain, obvious meaning, and regard all forced interpretations with great suspicion. As a general rule, whatever a verse of the Bible seems to mean, it does mean. Cecil's rule is a very valuable one, "The right way of interpreting Scripture is to take it as we find it, without any attempt to force it into any particular system." Well said Hooker, "I hold it for a most infallible rule in the exposition of Scripture, that when the literal construction will stand, the furthest from the literal is commonly the worst."

(h) In the last place, "read the Bible with Christ continually in view."

The primary object of all Scripture is to testify about Jesus:

Old Testament ceremonies are shadows of Christ.

Old Testament judges and deliverers are types of Christ.

Old Testament history shows the world's need of Christ.

Old Testament prophecies are full of Christ's sufferings.

Old Testament prophecies are full of Christ's glory yet to come.

The first coming and the second.

The Lord's humiliation.

The Lord's kingdom.

The Lord's cross and crown.

All these shine forth everywhere in the Bible. Remember this clue, if you would read the Bible right.

I might easily add to these hints, if space permitted. Few and short as they are, you will find them worth your attention. Act upon them, and I firmly believe you will never be allowed to miss the way to heaven. Act upon them, and you will find light continually increasing in your mind. No book of evidence can be compared with that internal evidence which he obtains who daily uses the Word in the right way. Such a man does not need the books of learned men—he has the witness in himself. The book satisfies and feeds his soul. A poor Christian woman once said to an unbeliever, "I am no scholar. I cannot argue like you. But I know that honey is honey, because it leaves a sweet taste in my mouth. And I know the Bible to be God's book, because of the taste it leaves in my heart."

(3) This paper may fall into the hands of some one who "loves and believes the Bible, and yet reads it only a little."

I fear there are many such people in this day. It is a day of hustle and hurry. It is a day of talking, and committee meetings, and public work. These things are all very well in their way, but I fear that they sometimes clip and cut short the private reading of the Bible. Does your conscience tell you that you are one of the persons I speak of? Listen to me, and I will say a few things which deserve your serious attention.

You are the man that is likely to "get little comfort from the Bible in time of need." Trials come at various times. Affliction is a searching wind, which strips the leaves off the trees, and exposes the birds' nests. Now I fear that your stores of Bible consolations may one day run very low. I fear lest you should find yourself at last on very short allowance, and come into the harbor weak, worn and thin.

You are the man that is likely "never to be established in the truth." I will not be surprised to hear that you are troubled with doubts and questions about assurance, grace, faith, perseverance, and the like. The devil is an old and cunning enemy. Like the Benjamites, he can "sling a stone at a hair and not miss" (Judges 20:16). He can quote Scripture easily enough when he pleases. Now you are not sufficiently ready with your weapons to be able to fight a good fight with him. Your armor does not fit well. Your sword sits loosely in your hand.

You are the man that is likely to "make mistakes in life." I will not wonder if I am told that you have erred about your own marriage—erred about your children's education of spiritual things—erred about the conduct of your household—erred about the company you keep. The world you steer through is full of rocks, and reefs, and sand bars. You are not sufficiently familiar either with the search lights or your charts.

You are the man that is likely to "be carried away by some deceptive false teacher for a time." It will not surprise me if those clever, eloquent men, who can "make the lie appear to be the truth," is leading you into many foolish notions. You are out of balance. No wonder if you are tossed to and from, like a cork on the waves.

All these are uncomfortable things. I want every reader of this paper to escape them all. Take the advice I offer you this day. Do not merely read your Bible "a little," but read it a great deal. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly" (Colossians 3:16). Do not be a mere babe in spiritual knowledge. Seek to become "well instructed in the kingdom of heaven," and to be continually adding new things to old. A religion of feeling is an uncertain thing. It is like the tide, sometimes high, and sometimes low. It is like the moon, sometimes bright, and sometimes dim. A religion of deep Bible knowledge, is a firm and lasting possession. It enables a man not merely to say, "I feel hope in Christ," but "I know whom I have believed" (2 Timothy 1:12).

(4) This paper may fall into the hands of someone who "reads the Bible a lot, and yet believes he is no better because of his reading."

This is a crafty temptation of the devil. At one stage he says, "do not read the Bible at all." At another he says, "Your reading does you no good: give it up." Are you that man? I feel for you from the bottom of my soul. Let me try to do you good.

Do not think you are getting no good from the Bible, merely because you do not see that good day by day. The greatest effects are often silent, quiet, and hard to detect at the time they are being produced. Think of the influence of the moon upon the earth, and of the air upon the human lungs.

Remember how silently the dew falls, and how unperceptively the grass grows. There may be far more going on than you think in your soul by your Bible-reading.

The Word may be gradually producing deep "impressions" on your heart, of which you are not presently aware. Often when the memory is retaining no facts, the character of a man is receiving some everlasting impression. Is sin becoming every year more hateful to you? Is Christ becoming every year more precious? Is holiness becoming every year more lovely and desirable in your eyes? If these things are so, take courage. The Bible is doing you good, though you may not be able to trace it out day by day.

The Bible may be restraining you from some sin or delusion into which you would otherwise run. It may be daily keeping you back, and hedging you up, and preventing many a false step. Yes, you might soon find this out to your hurt, if you were to cease reading the Word! The very familiarity of blessings sometimes makes us insensible to their value. Resist the devil. Settle it in your mind as an established rule, that, whether you feel it at the moment or not, you are inhaling spiritual health by reading the Bible, and unknowingly becoming more strong.

(5) This paper may fall into the hands of some who "really love the Bible, live upon the Bible, and read it regularly."

Are you one of these? Give me your attention, and I will mention a few things which we will do well to lay to heart for time to come.

Let us resolve to "read the Bible more and more" every year we live. Let us try to get it rooted in our memories, an engraved into our hearts. Let us be thoroughly well provisioned with it against the voyage of death. Who knows but we may have a very stormy passage? Sight and hearing may fail us, and we may be in deep waters. Oh, to have the Word "hid in our hearts" in such an hour as that! (Psalm 119:11).

Let us resolve to be "more watchful over our Bible-reading" every year that we live. Let us be jealously careful about the time we give to it, and the manner that time is spent. Let us beware of omitting our daily reading without sufficient cause. Let us not be gaping, and yawning and dozing over our book, while we read. Let us read like a London merchant studying the city article in the Times—or like a wife reading a husband's letter from a distant land. Let us be very careful that we never exalt any minister, or sermon, or book, or tract, or friend above the Word. Cursed be that book, or tract, or human counsel, which creeps in between us and the Bible, and hides the Bible from our eyes! Once more I say, let us be very watchful. The moment we open the Bible the devil sits down by our side. Oh, to read with a hungry spirit, and a simple desire for edification!

Let us resolve to "honor the Bible more in our families." Let us read it morning and evening to our children and spouses, and not be ashamed to let men see that we do so. Let us not be discouraged by seeing no good arise from it. The Bible-reading in a family has kept many a one from the jail and the prison, and from the eternal fires of hell.

Let us resolve to "meditate more on the Bible." It is good to take with us two or three texts when we go out into the world, and to turn them over and over in our minds whenever we have a little leisure. It keeps out many vain thoughts. It tightens the nail of daily reading. It preserves our souls from stagnating and breeding corrupt things. It sanctifies and quickens our memories, and prevents them becoming like those ponds where the frogs live but the fish die.

Let us resolve to "talk more to believers about the Bible" when we meet them. Sorry to say, the conversation of Christians, when they

do meet, is often sadly unprofitable! How many frivolous, and trifling, and uncharitable things are said! Let us bring out the Bible more, and it will help to drive the devil away, and keep our hearts in tune. Oh, that we may all strive so to walk together in this evil world, that Jesus may often draw near, and go with us, as He went with the two disciples journeying to Emmaus!

Last of all, lot us resolve "to live by the Bible more and more" every year we live. Let us frequently take account of all our opinions and practices—of our habits and tempers—of our behavior in public and in private—in the world, and in our own homes. Let us measure everything by the Bible, and resolve, by God's help, to conform to it. Oh that we may learn increasingly to "keep our way pure? By living according to the Word." (Psalm 119:9).

I commend all these thing to the serious and prayerful attention of every one into whose hands this paper may fall. I want the ministers of my beloved country to be Bible-reading ministers—the congregations, Bible-reading congregations—and the nation, a Bible-reading nation. To bring about this desirable end I cast in my resources into God's treasury. The Lord grant that it may prove not to have been in vain!

SICKNESS

J. C. Ryle

"He whom You love is sick." John 11:3

The chapter from which this text is taken is well known to all Bible readers. In life-like description, in touching interest, in sublime simplicity, there is no writing in existence that will bear comparison with that chapter. A narrative like this is to my own mind one of the great proofs of the inspiration of Scripture. When I read the story of Bethany, I feel "There is something here which the infidel can never account for."-"This is nothing else but the finger of God."

The words which I specially dwell upon in this chapter are singularly affecting and instructive. They record the message which Martha and Mary sent to Jesus when their brother Lazarus was sick: "Lord, behold he whom You loves is sick" That message was short and simple. Yet almost every word is deeply suggestive.

Mark the child-like faith of these holy women. They turned to the Lord Jesus in their hour of need, as the frightened infant turns to its mother, or the compass-needle turns to the Pole. They turned to Him as their Shepherd, their almighty Friend, their Brother born for adversity. Different as they were in natural temperament, the two sisters in this matter were entirely agreed. Christ's help was their first thought in the day of trouble. Christ was the refuge to which they fled in the hour of need. Blessed are all those who do likewise!

Mark the simple humility of their language about Lazarus. They call Him "He whom You loves. They do not say, "He who loves You, believes in You, serves You," but "He whom You loves." Martha and Mary were deeply taught of God. They had learned that Christ's love towards us, and not our love towards Christ, is the true ground of expectation, and true foundation of hope-Blessed,-again, are all those who are taught likewise! To look inward to our love towards Christ is painfully unsatisfying: to look outward to Christ's love towards us is peace.

Mark, lastly, the touching circumstance which the message of Martha and Mary reveals: "He whom You loves is sick.." Lazarus was a good man, converted, believing, renewed, sanctified, a friend of Christ, and an heir of glory. And yet Lazarus was sick! Then sickness is no sign that God is displeased. Sickness is intended to be a blessing to us, and not a curse. "All things work together for good to those who love God, and are called according to His purpose." "All things are yours,-life, death, things present, or things to come: for you are Christ's; and Christ is God's." (Rom. 8:28; I Cor. 3:22-23. Blessed, I say again, are those who have learned this! Happy are they who can say, when they are ill, "This is my Father's doing. It must be well."

I invite the attention of my readers to the subject of sickness. The subject is one which we ought frequently to look in the face. We cannot avoid it. It needs no prophet's eye to see sickness coming to each of us in turn one day. "In the midst of life we are in death." Let us turn aside for a few moments, and consider sickness as Christians. The consideration will not hasten its coming, and by God's blessing may teach us wisdom.

In considering the subject of sickness, three points appear to me to demand attention. On each I shall say a few words.

I. The universal prevalence of sickness and disease.

II. The general benefits which sickness confers on mankind.

III. The special duties to which sickness calls us.

I. The universal prevalence of sickness

I need not dwell long on this point. To elaborate the proof of it would only be multiplying truisms, and heaping up common-places which all allow.

Sickness is everywhere. In Europe, in Asia, in Africa, in America; in hot countries and in cold, in civilized nations and in savage tribes,-men, women, and children sicken and die.

Sickness is among all classes. Grace does not lift a believer above the reach of it. Riches will not buy exemption from it. Rank cannot prevent its assaults. Kings and their subjects, masters and servants, rich men and poor, learned and unlearned, teachers and scholars, doctors and patients, ministers and hearers, all alike go down before this great foe. "The rich man's wealth is his strong city." (Prov. 18:11.) The Englishman's house is called his castle; but there are no doors and bars which can keep out disease and death.

Sickness is of every sort and description. From the crown of our head to the sole of our foot we are liable to disease. Our capacity of suffering is something fearful to contemplate. Who can count up the ailments by which our bodily frame may be assailed? Who ever visited a museum of morbid anatomy without a shudder? "Strange that a harp of thousand strings should keep in tune so long." It is not, to my mind, so wonderful that men should die so soon, as it is that they should live so long.

Sickness is often one of the most humbling and distressing trials that can come upon man. It can turn the strongest into a little child, and make him feel-"the grasshopper a burden." (Eccles. 12:5.) It can unnerve the boldest, and make him tremble at the fall of a pin. We are "fearfully and wonderfully made." (Psalm 139:14.) The connection between body and mind is curiously close. The influence that some diseases can exercise upon the temper and spirits is immensely great. There are ailments of brain, and liver, and nerves, which can bring down a Solomon in mind to a state little better than that of a babe. He that would know to what depths of humiliation poor man can fall, has only to attend for a short time on sick-beds.

Sickness is not preventable by anything that man can do. The average duration of life may doubtless be somewhat lengthened. The skill of doctors may continually discover new remedies, and effect surprising cures. The enforcement of wise sanitary regulations may greatly lower the death rate in a land. But, after all,-whether in healthy or unhealthy localities,-whether in mild climates or in cold,-whether treated by homeopathy or allopathy,-men will sicken and die. "The days of our years are three-score years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be four-score years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away." (Psalm 90:10.) That witness is indeed true. It was true 3300 years ago.-It is true still.

Now what can we make of this great fact,-the universal prevalence of sickness? How shall we account for it? What explanation can we give of it? What answer shall we give to our inquiring children when they ask us, "Father, why do people get ill and die?" These are grave questions. A few words upon them will not be out of place. Can we suppose for a moment that God created sickness and disease at the beginning? Can we imagine that He who formed our world in such perfect order was the Former of needless suffering and pain? Can we think that He who made all things "very good," made Adam's race to sicken and to die? The idea is, to my mind, revolting. It introduces a grand imperfection into the midst of God's perfect works. I must find another solution to satisfy my mind.

The only explanation that satisfies me is that which the Bible gives. Something has come into the world which has dethroned man from his original position, and stripped him of his original privileges. Something has come in, which, like a handful of gravel thrown into the midst of machinery, has marred the perfect order of God's creation. And what is that something? I answer, in one word, It is sin. "Sin has entered into the world, and death by sin." (Rom. 5:12.) Sin is the cause of all the sickness, and disease, and pain, and suffering which prevail on the earth. They are all a part of that curse which came into the world when Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit and fell. There would have been no sickness, if there had been no fall. There would have been no disease, if there had been no sin.

I pause for a moment at this point, and yet in pausing I do not depart from my subject. I pause to remind my readers that there is no ground so untenable as that which is occupied by the Atheist, the Deist, or the unbeliever in the Bible. I advise every young reader of this paper, who is puzzled by the bold and specious arguments of the infidel, to study well that most important subject,-the Difficulties of Infidelity. I say boldly that it requires far more credulity to be a infidel than to be a Christian. I say boldly that there are. great broad patent facts in the condition of mankind, which nothing but the Bible can explain, and that one of the most striking of these facts is the universal prevalence of pain, sickness, and disease. In short, one of the mightiest difficulties in the way of Atheists and Deists, is the body of man.

You have doubtless heard of Atheists. An Atheist is one who professes to believe that there is no God, no Creator, no First Cause, and that all things came together in this world by mere chance.-Now shall we listen to such a doctrine as this? Go, take an Atheist to one of the excellent surgical schools of our land, and ask him to study the wonderful structure of the human body. Show him the matchless skill with which every joint, and vein, and valve, and muscle, and sinew, and nerve, and bone, and limb, has been formed. Show him the perfect adaptation of every part of the human frame to the purpose which it serves. Show him the thousand delicate contrivances for meeting wear and tear, and supplying daily waste of vigor. And then ask this man who denies the being of a God, and a great First Cause, if all this wonderful mechanism is the result of chance? Ask him if it came together at first by luck and accident? Ask him if he so thinks about the watch he looks at, the bread he eats, or the coat he wears? Oh, no! Design is an insuperable difficulty in the Atheist's way. There is a God. You have doubtless heard of Deists. A Deist is one who professes to believe that there is a God, who made the world and all things therein. But He does not believe the Bible. "A God, but no Bible!-a Creator, but no Christianity!" This is the Deist's creed.

Now, shall we listen to this doctrine? Go again, I say, and take a Deist to an hospital, and show him some of the awful handiwork of disease. Take him to the bed where lies some tender child, scarce knowing good from evil, with an incurable cancer. Send him to the ward where there is a loving mother of a large family in the last state of some excruciating disease. Show him some of the racking pains and agonies to which flesh is heir, and ask him to account for them. Ask this man, who believes there is a great and Wise God who made the world, but cannot believe the Bible,-ask him how he accounts for these traces of disorder and imperfection in his God's creation. Ask this man, who sneers at Christian theology and is too wise to believe the fall of Adam,-ask him upon his theory to explain the universal prevalence of pain and disease in the world. You may ask in vain! You will get no satisfactory answer. Sickness and suffering are insuperable difficulties in the Deist's way. Man has sinned, and therefore man suffers. Adam fell from his first estate, and therefore Adam's children sicken and die.

The universal prevalence of sickness is one of the indirect evidences that the Bible is true. The Bible explains it. The Bible answers the questions about it which will arise in every inquiring mind. No other systems of religion can do this. They all fail here. They are silent. They are confounded. The Bible alone looks the subject in the face. It boldly proclaims the fact that man is a fallen creature, and with

equal boldness proclaims a vast remedial system to meet his needs. I feel shut up to the conclusion that the Bible is from God. Christianity is a revelation from heaven. "Your word is truth." (John 17:17.)

Let us stand fast on the old ground, that the Bible, and the Bible only, is God's revelation of Himself to man. Do not be moved by the many new assaults which modern skepticism is making on the inspired volume. Heed not the hard questions which the enemies of the faith are fond of putting about Bible difficulties, and to which perhaps you often feel unable to give an answer. Anchor your soul firmly on this safe principle,-that the whole book is God's truth. Tell the enemies of the Bible that, in spite of all their arguments, there is no book in the world which will bear comparison with the Bible,-none that so thoroughly meets man's want-none that explains so much of the state of mankind. As to the hard things in the Bible, tell them you are content to wait. You find enough plain truth in the book to satisfy your conscience and save your soul. The hard things will be cleared up in one day. What you know not now, you will know hereafter.

II. The second point I propose to consider is **the general Benefits which sickness confers on mankind.**

I use that word "benefits" advisedly. I feel it of deep importance to see this part of our subject clearly. I know well that sickness is one of the supposed weak points in God's government of the world, on which skeptical minds love to dwell. "Can God be a God of love, when He allows pain? Can God be a God of mercy, when He permits disease? He might prevent pain and disease; but He does not. How can these things be?" Such is the reasoning which often comes across the heart of man.

I reply to all such reasoners, that their doubts and questionings are most unreasonable. They might as well doubt the existence of a Creator, because the order of the universe is disturbed by earthquakes, hurricanes, and storms. They might as well doubt the providence of God, because of the horrible massacres of Delhi and Cawnpore. All this would be just as reasonable as to doubt the mercy of God, because of the presence of sickness in the world.

I ask all who find it hard to reconcile the prevalence of disease and pain with the love of God, to cast their eyes on the world around them, and to mark what is going on. I ask them to observe the extent to which men constantly submit to present loss for the sake of future gain,-present sorrow for the sake of future joy,-present pain for the sake of future health. The seed is thrown into the ground, and rots: but we sow in the hope of a future harvest. The boy is sent to school amid many tears: but we send him in the hope of his getting future wisdom. The father of a family undergoes some fearful surgical operation: but he bears it, in the hope of future health.- I ask men to apply this great principle to God's government of the world. I ask them to believe that God allows pain, sickness, and disease, not because He loves to vex man, but because He desires to benefit man's heart, and mind, and conscience, and soul, to all eternity. Once more I repeat, that I speak of the "benefits" of sickness on purpose and advisedly. I know the suffering and pain which sickness entails. I admit the misery and wretchedness which it often brings in its train. But I cannot regard it as an unmixed evil. I see in it a wise permission of God. I see in it a useful provision to check the ravages of sin and the devil among men's souls. If man had never sinned I should have been at a loss to discern the benefit of sickness. But since sin is in the world, I can see that sickness is a good. It is a blessing quite as much as a curse. It is a rough schoolmaster, I grant But it is a real friend to man's soul.

(a) Sickness helps to remind men of death. The most live as if they were never going to die. They follow business, or pleasure, or politics, or science, as if earth was their eternal home. They plan and scheme for the future, like the rich fool in the parable, as if they had a long lease of life, and were not, tenants at will. A heavy illness sometimes goes far to dispel these delusions. It awakens men from their day-dreams, and reminds those who they have to die as well as to live. Now this I say emphatically is a mighty good.

(b) Sickness helps to make men think seriously of God, and their souls, and the world to come. The most in their days of health can find no time for such thoughts. They dislike them. They put them away. They count them troublesome and disagreeable. Now a severe disease has sometimes a wonderful power of mustering and rallying these thoughts, and bringing them up before the eyes of a man's soul. Even a wicked king like Benhadad, when sick, could think of Elisha (2 Kings 8:8.) Even heathen sailors, when death was in sight, were afraid, and "cried every man to his god." (Jonah 1:5.) Surely anything that helps to make men think is a good.

(c) Sickness helps to soften men's hearts, and teach them wisdom. The natural heart is as hard as a stone. It can see no good in anything which is not of this life, and no happiness excepting in this world. A long illness sometimes goes far to correct these ideas. It exposes the emptiness and hollowness of what the world calls "good" things, and teaches us to hold them with a loose hand. The man of business finds that money alone is not everything the heart requires. The woman of the world finds that costly apparel, and novel reading, and the reports of balls and operas, are miserable comforters in a sick room. Surely anything that obliges us to alter our weights and measures of earthly things is a real good.

(d) Sickness helps to level and humble us. We are all naturally proud and high-minded. Few, even of the poorest, are free from the infection. Few are to be found who do not look down on somebody else, and secretly flatter themselves that they are "not as other men." A sick bed is a mighty tamer of such thoughts as these. It forces on us the mighty truth that we are all poor worms, that we "dwell in houses of clay," and are "crushed before the moth." (Job 4:19), and that kings and subjects, masters and servants, rich and poor, are all dying creatures, and will soon stand side by side at the bar of God. In the sight of the coffin and the grave it is not easy to be proud. Surely anything that teaches that lesson is good.

(e) Finally, sickness helps to try men's religion, of what sort it is. There are not many on earth who have no religion at all. Yet few have a religion that will bear inspection. Most are content with traditions received from their fathers, and can render no reason of the hope that is in them. Now disease is sometimes most useful to a man in exposing the utter worthlessness of his soul's foundation. It often shows him that he has nothing solid under his feet, and nothing firm under his hand. It makes him find out that, although he may have had a form of religion, he has been all his life worshiping "an unknown God." Many a creed looks well on the smooth waters of health, which turns out utterly unsound and useless on the rough waves of the sick bed. The storms of winter often bring out the defects in a man's dwelling, and sickness often exposes the gracelessness of a man's soul. Surely anything that makes us find out the real character of our faith is a good. I do not say that sickness confers these benefits on all to whom it comes. Alas, I can say

nothing of the kind! Myriads are yearly laid low by illness, and restored to health, who evidently learn no lesson from their sick beds, and return again to the world. Myriads are yearly passing through sickness to the grave, and yet receiving no more spiritual impressions from it than the beasts that perish. While they live they have no feeling, and when they die there are "no bands in their death." (Psalm 73:4.) These are awful things to say. But they are true. The degree of deadness to which man's heart and conscience may attain, is a depth which I cannot pretend to fathom.

But does sickness confer the benefits of which I have been speaking on only a few? I will allow nothing of the kind. I believe that in very many cases sickness produces impressions more or less akin to those of which I have just been speaking. I believe that in many minds sickness is God's "day of visitation," and that feelings are continually aroused on a sick bed which, if improved, might, by God's grace, result in salvation. I believe that in heathen lands sickness often paves the way for the missionary, and makes the poor idolater lend a willing ear to the glad tidings of the Gospel. I believe that in our own land sickness is one of the greatest aids to the minister of the Gospel, and that sermons and counsels are often brought home in the day of disease which we have neglected in the day of health. I believe that sickness is one of God's most important subordinate instruments in the saving of men, and that though the feelings it calls forth are often temporary, it is also often a means whereby the Spirit works effectually on the heart. In short, I believe firmly that the sickness of men's bodies has often led, in God's wonderful providence, to the salvation of men's souls.

I leave this branch of my subject here. It needs no further remark. If sickness can do the things of which I have been speaking (and who will gainsay it?), if sickness in a wicked world can help to make men think of God and their souls, then sickness confers benefits on mankind.

We have no right to murmur at sickness, and repine at its presence in the world. We ought rather to thank God for it. It is God's witness. It is the soul's adviser. It is an awakener to the conscience. It is a purifier to the heart. Surely I have a right to tell you that sickness is a blessing and not a curse,-a help and not an injury,-a gain and not a loss,-a friend and not a foe to mankind. So long as we have a world wherein there is sin, it is a mercy that it is a world wherein It there is sickness.

III. The third and last point which I propose to consider, is **the special duties which the prevalence of sickness entails on each one of ourselves.**

I should be sorry to leave the subject of sickness without saying something on this point. hold it to be of cardinal importance not to be content with generalities in delivering God's message to souls. I an anxious to impress on each one into whose hands this paper may fall, his own personal responsibility in connection with the subject. would sincerely have no one lay down this paper unable to answer the questions, "What practical lesson have I learned? What, in a world of disease and death, what ought I to do?"

(a) One paramount duty which the prevalence of sickness entails on man, is that of living habitually prepared to meet God. Sickness is a remembrancer of death. Death is the door through which we must all pass to judgment. Judgment is the time when we must at last see God face to face. Surely the first lesson which the inhabitant of a sick and dying world should learn should be to prepare to meet his God.

When are you prepared to meet God? Never until your iniquities are forgiven, and your sin covered! Never until your heart is renewed, and your will taught to delight in the will of God! You have many sins. If you go to church, your own mouth is taught to confess this every Sunday. The blood of Jesus Christ can alone cleanse those sins away. The righteousness of Christ can alone make you acceptable in the sight of God. Faith, simple childlike faith, can alone give you an interest in Christ and His benefits. Would you know whether you are prepared to meet God? Then where is your faith? Your heart is naturally unfit for God's company. You have no real pleasure in doing His will. The Holy Spirit must transform you after the image of Christ. Old things must pass away. All things must become new. Would you know whether you are prepared to meet God? Then, where is your grace? Where are the evidences of your conversion and sanctification?

I believe that this, and nothing less than Pardon of sin this, is preparedness to meet God. and fitness for God's presence,-justification by faith and sanctification of the heart,-the blood of Christ sprinkled on us, and the Spirit of Christ dwelling in us,-these are the grand essentials of the Christian religion. These are no mere words and names to furnish bones of contention for wrangling theologians. These are sober, solid, substantial realities. To live in the actual possession of these things, in a world full of sickness and death, is the first duty which I press home upon your soul.

(b) Another paramount duty which the prevalence of sickness entails on you, is that of living habitually ready to bear it patiently. Sickness is no doubt a trying thing to flesh and blood. To feel our nerves unstrung, and our natural force abated,-to be obliged to sit still and be cut off from all our usual avocations,-to see our plans broken off and our purposes disappointed,-to endure long hours, and days, and nights of weariness and pain,-all this is a severe strain on poor sinful human nature. What wonder if peevishness and impatience are brought out by disease! Surely in such a dying world as this we should study patience.

How shall we learn to bear sickness patiently, when sickness comes to our turn? We must lay up stores of grace in the time of health. We must seek for the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit over our unruly tempers and dispositions. We must make a real business of our prayers, and regularly ask for strength to endure God's will as well as to do it. Such strength is to be had for the asking: "If you shall ask anything in my name, I will do it for you." (John 14:14.) I cannot think it needless to dwell on this point. I believe the passive graces of Christianity receive far less notice than they deserve. Meekness, gentleness, patience, faith, patience, are all mentioned in the Word of God as fruits of the Spirit. They are passive graces which specially glorify God. They often make men think, who despise the active side of the Christian character. Never do these graces shine so brightly as they do in the sick room. They enable many a sick person to preach a silent sermon, which those around him never forget. Would you adorn the doctrine you profess? Would you make your Christianity beautiful in the eyes of others? Then take the hint I give you this day. Lay up a store of patience against the time of illness. Then, though your sickness be not to death, it shall be for the "glory of God." (John 11:4.)

(c) One more paramount duty which the prevalence of sickness entails on you, is that of habitual readiness to feel with and help your fellow-man. Sickness is never very far from us. Few are the families who have not some sick relative. Few are the parishes where you

will not find some one ill. But wherever there is sickness, there is a call to duty. A little timely assistance in some cases,-a kindly visit in others,-a friendly inquiry,-a mere expression of sympathy, may do a vast good. These are the sort of things which soften asperities, and bring men together, and promote good feeling. These are ways by which you may ultimately lead men to Christ and save their souls. These are good works to which every professing Christian should be ready. In a world full of sickness and disease we ought to "bear one another's burdens," and be "kind one to another." (Gal. 6:2; Ephes. 4:32.)

These things, I dare say, may appear to some little and trifling. They must needs be doing something great, and grand, and striking, and heroic! I take leave to say that conscientious attention to these little acts of brotherly-kindness is one of the clearest evidences of having "the mind of Christ." They are acts in which our blessed Master Himself was abundant. He was ever "going about doing good" to the sick and sorrowful. (Acts 10:38.) They are acts to which He attaches great importance in that most solemn passage of Scripture, the description of the last judgment. He says there: "I was sick, and you visited Me." (,Matt. 25:36.)

Have you any desire to prove the reality of your charity,-that blessed grace which so many talk of, and so few practice? If you have, beware of unfeeling selfishness and neglect of your sick brethren. Search them out. Assist them if they need aid. Show your sympathy with them. Try to lighten their burdens. Above all, strive to do good to their souls. It will do you good if it does no good to them. It will keep your heart from murmuring. It may prove a blessing to your own soul. I firmly believe that God is testing and proving us by every case of sickness within our reach. By permitting suffering, He tries whether Christians have any feeling. Beware, lest you be weighed in the balances and found wanting. If you can live in a sick and dying world and not feel for others, you have yet much to learn.

I leave this branch of my subject here. I throw out the points I have named as suggestions, and I pray God that they may work in many minds. I repeat, that habitual preparedness to meet God,-habitual readiness to suffer patiently,-habitual willingness to sympathize heartily,-are plain duties which sickness entails on all. They are duties within the reach of every one. In naming them I ask nothing extravagant or unreasonable. I bid no man retire into a monastery and ignore the duties of his station. I only want men to realize that they live in a sick and dying world, and to live accordingly. And I say boldly, that the man who lives the life of faith, and holiness, and patience, and charity, is not only the most true Christian, but the most wise and reasonable man.

And now I **conclude all with four words of practical application**. I want the subject of this paper to be turned to some spiritual use. My heart's desire and prayer to God in placing it in this volume is to do good to souls.

(1) In the first place, I offer a question to all who read this paper, to which, as God's ambassador, I entreat their serious attention. It is a question which grows naturally out of the subject on which I have been writing. It is a question which concerns all, of every rank, and class, and condition. I ask you, What will you do when you are ill? The time must come when you, as well as others, must go down the dark valley of the shadow of death. The hour must come when you, like all your forefathers, must sicken and die. The time may be near or far off. God only knows. But whenever the time may be, I ask again, What are you going to do? Where do you mean to turn for comfort? On what do you mean to rest your soul? On what do you mean to build your hope? From where will you fetch your consolations?

I do entreat you not to put these questions away. Suffer them to work on your conscience, and rest not until you can give them a satisfactory answer. Trifle not with that precious gift, an immortal soul. Defer not the consideration of the matter to a more convenient season. Presume not on a death-bed repentance. The greatest business ought surely not to be left to the last. One dying thief was saved that men might not despair, but only one that none might presume. I repeat the question. I am sure it deserves an answer. "What will you do when you are ill ?"

If you were going to live forever in this world I would not address you as I do. But it cannot be. There is no escaping the common lot of all mankind. Nobody can die in our stead. The day must come when we must each go to our long home. Against that day I want you to be prepared. The body which now takes up so much of your attention-the body which you now clothe, and feed, and warm with so much care,-that body must return again to the dust. Oh, think what an awful thing it would prove at last to have provided for everything except the one thing needful,-to have provided for the body, but to have neglected the soul,-to die, in fact, like Cardinal Beaufort, and "give no sign" of being saved! Once more I press my question on your conscience: "WHAT WILL YOU DO WHEN YOU ARE ILL?"

(2) In the next place, I offer counsel to all who feel they need it and are willing to take it, to all who feel they are not yet prepared to meet God. That counsel is short and simple. Acquaint yourself with the Lord Jesus Christ without delay. Repent, be converted, flee to Christ, and be saved.

Either you have a soul or you have not. You will surely never deny that you have. Then if you have a soul, seek that soul's salvation. Of all gambling in the world, there is none so reckless as that of the man who lives unprepared to meet God, and yet puts off repentance. Either you have sins or you have not. If you have (and who will dare to deny it?), break off from those sins, cast away your transgressions, and turn away from them with-out delay. Either you need a Savior or you do not. If you do, flee to the only Savior this very day, and cry mightily to Him to save your soul. Apply to Christ at once. Seek Him by faith. Commit your soul into His keeping. Cry mightily to Him for pardon and peace with God. Ask Him to pour down the Holy Spirit upon you, and make you a thorough Christian. He will hear you. No matter what you have been, He will not refuse your prayer. He has said, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." (John 6:37.) Beware, I beseech you, of a vague and indefinite Christianity. Do not be content with a general hope that all is right because you belong to the old Church of England, and that all will be well at last because God is merciful. Rest not, rest not without personal union with Christ Himself. Rest not, rest not until you have the witness of the Spirit in your heart, that you are washed, and sanctified, and Justified, and one with Christ, and Christ in you. Rest not until you can say with the apostle, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day." (2 Tim. 1:12.)

Vague, and indefinite, and indistinct religion may do very well in time of health. It will never do in the day of sickness. A mere formal,

perfunctory Church membership may carry a man through the sunshine of youth and prosperity. It will break down entirely when death is in sight. Nothing will do then but real heart-union with Christ. Christ interceding for us at God's right hand, Christ known and believed as our Priest, our Physician, our Friend, Christ alone can rob death of its sting and enable us to face sickness without fear. He alone can deliver those who through fear of death are in bondage. I say to every one who needs advice, Be acquainted with Christ. As ever you would have hope and comfort on the bed of sickness, be acquainted with Christ. Seek Christ. Apply to Christ.

Take every care and trouble to Him when you are acquainted with Him. He will keep you and carry you through all. Pour out your heart before Him, when your conscience is burdened. He is the true Confessor. He alone can absolve you and take the burden away. Turn to Him first in the day of sickness, like Martha and Mary. Keep on looking to Him to the last breath of your life. Christ is worth knowing. The more you know Him the better you will love Him. Then be acquainted with Jesus Christ.

(3) In the third place, I exhort all true Christians who read this paper to remember how much they may glorify God in the time of sickness, and to lie quite in God's hand when they are ill. I feel it very important to touch on this point. I know how ready the heart of a believer is to faint, and how busy Satan is in suggesting doubts and questionings, when the body of a Christian is weak. I have seen something of the depression and melancholy which sometimes comes upon the children of God when they are suddenly laid aside by disease, and obliged to sit still. I have marked how prone some good people are to torment themselves with morbid thoughts at such seasons, and to say in their hearts, "God has forsaken me: I am cast out of His sight."

I earnestly entreat all sick believers to remember that they may honor God as much by patient suffering as they can by active work. It often shows more grace to sit still than it does to go to and fro, and perform great exploits. I entreat them to remember that Christ cares for them as much when they are sick as He does when they are well, and that the very chastisement they feel so acutely is sent in love, and not in anger. Above all, I entreat them to recollect the sympathy of Jesus for all His weak members. They are always tenderly cared for by Him, but never so much as in their time of need. Christ has had great experience of sickness. He knows the heart of a sick man. He used to see "all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease" when He was upon earth. He felt specially for the sick in the days of His flesh. He feels for them specially still. Sickness and suffering, I often think, make believers more like their Lord in experience, than health. "Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses." (Isaiah 53:3; Matt. 8:17.) The Lord Jesus was a "Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." None have such an opportunity of learning the mind of a suffering Savior as suffering disciples.

(4) I conclude with a word of exhortation to all believers, which I heartily pray God to impress upon their souls. I exhort you to keep up a habit of close communion with Christ, and never to be afraid of "going too far" in your religion. Remember this, if you wish to have "great peace" in your times of sickness.

I observe with regret a tendency in some quarters to lower the standard of practical Christianity, and to denounce what are called "extreme views" about a Christian's daily walk in life. I remark with pain that even religious people will sometimes look coldly on those who withdraw from worldly society, and will censure them as "exclusive, narrow-minded, illiberal, uncharitable, sour-spirited," and the like. I warn every believer in Christ who reads this paper to beware of being influenced by such censures. I entreat him, if he needs light in the valley of death, to "keep himself unspotted from the world," to "follow the Lord very fully," and to walk very closely with God. (James 1:27; Num. 14:24.)

I believe that the want of "thoroughness" about many people's Christianity is one secret of their little comfort, both in health and sickness. I believe that the "half-and-half,"-"keep-in-with everybody" religion, which satisfies many in the present day, is offensive to God, and sows thorns in dying pillows, which hundreds never discover until too late. I believe that the weakness and feebleness of such a religion never comes out so much as it does upon a sick bed.

If you and I want "strong consolation" in our time of need, we must not be content with a bare union with Christ. (Heb. 6:18.) We must seek to know something of heart-felt, experimental communion with Him. Never, never let us forget, that union" is one thing, and "communion" another. Thousands, I fear, who know what "union" with Christ is, know nothing of "communion."

The day may come when after a long fight with disease, we shall feel that medicine can do no more, and that nothing remains but to die. Friends will be standing by, unable to help us. Hearing, eyesight, even the power of praying, will be fast failing us. The world and its shadows will be melting beneath our feet. Eternity, with its realities, will be looming large before our minds. What shall support us in that trying hour? What shall enable us to feel, "I fear no evil"? (Psalm 23:4.) Nothing, nothing can do it but close communion with Christ. Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith,-Christ putting His right arm under our heads,-Christ felt to be sitting by our side,-Christ can alone give us the complete victory in the last struggle.

Let us cleave to Christ more closely, love Him more heartily, live to Him more thoroughly, copy Him more exactly, confess Him more boldly, follow Him more fully. Religion like this will always bring its own reward. Worldly people may 'Laugh at it. Weak brethren may think it extreme. But it will wear well. At even time it will bring us light. In sickness it will bring us peace. In the world to come it will give us a crown of glory that fades not away.

The time is short. The fashion of this world passes away. A few more sicknesses, and all will be over. A few more funerals, and our own funeral will take place. A few more storms and tossings, and we shall be safe in harbor. We travel towards a world where there is no more sickness,-where parting, and pain, and crying, and mourning, are done with for evermore. Heaven is becoming every year more full, and earth more empty. The friends ahead are becoming more numerous than the friends astern. "Yet a little time and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry." (Heb. 10:37.) In His presence shall be fullness of joy. Christ shall wipe away all tears from His people's eyes. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is Death. But He shall be destroyed. Death himself shall one day die. (Rev. 20:14.) In the meantime let us live the life of faith in the Son of God. Let us lean all our weight on Christ and rejoice in the thought that He lives for evermore.

Yes: blessed be God! Christ lives, though we may die. Christ lives, though friends and families are carried to the grave. He lives who

abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light by the Gospel. He lives who said, "O death, I will be your plagues: o grave, I will be your destruction." (Hos. 13:14.) He lives who will one day change our vile body, and make it like unto His glorious body. In sickness and in health, in life and in death, let us lean confidently on Him. Surely we ought to say daily with one of old, "Blessed be God for Jesus Christ!"

Signs of the Times

By J. C. Ryle,
October 21, 1884

Enormous luxury, extravagance, self-indulgence, mammon-worship, and an idolatry of fashion and amusements, are sorrowful marks of our times.

With all our outward show of religion, is there any proportionate increase of internal reality? With all this immense growth of external Christianity, is there any corresponding growth of vital godliness? Is there more faith, repentance, and holiness among the worshipers in our churches? Is there more of that saving faith without which it is impossible to please God, more of that repentance unto salvation without which a man must perish, and more of that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord? Is our Lord Jesus Christ more known and trusted and loved and obeyed? Is the inward work of the Holy Spirit more realized and experienced among our people? Are the grand verities of justification, conversion, sanctification, more thoroughly grasped and rightly esteemed by our congregations? Is there more private Bible reading, private prayer, private self-denial, private mortification of the flesh, private exhibition of meekness, gentleness, and unselfishness? In a word, is there more private religion at home in all the relations of life? These are very serious questions, and I wish they could receive very satisfactory answers. I sometimes fear that there is an enormous amount of hollowness and unreality in much of the Church religion of the present day, and that, if weighed in God's balances, it would be found terribly wanting.

For after all, we must remember that it is written, 'Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.' The great Head of the Church has said, 'This people draws near to me with their mouth, and honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.' He has also said, 'The true worshipers shall worship in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeks such to worship Him.' If there is one thing more clearly taught than another in the Word of God, it is the utter uselessness of formal outward worship, however beautifully conducted, when the hearts of the worshipers are not right in the sight of God. I suspect that the Temple worship in the days when our Lord Jesus Christ was upon earth was as perfectly and beautifully performed as possible. I have little doubt that the music, the singing, the prayers, the dress of the priests, the gestures, the postures, the regularity and punctuality of the ceremonial observances, the keeping of the feasts and fasts, were all perfection itself, and there was nothing faulty or defective. But where was true saving religion in those days? What was the inward godliness of men like Annas and Caiaphas and their companions? What was the general standard of living among the fierce zealots of the law of Moses who crucified the Lord of Glory? You all know as well as I do. There is only one answer. The whole Jewish Church, with all its magnificent ritual, was nothing but a great whited sepulcher, beautiful without, but utterly rotten and corrupt within. In short, the Jewish Church was intended by God to be a beacon to all Christendom, and I am certain that these are days in which its lessons ought not to be forgotten.

We must not be content with what men call 'bright and hearty' services, and frequent administrations of the Lord's Supper. We must remember that these things do not constitute the whole of religion, and that no Christianity is valuable in the sight of God which does not influence the hearts, the consciences, and the lives of those who profess it. It is not always the church and congregation in which there is the best music and singing, and from which young people return saying, 'How beautiful it was,' in which God takes most pleasure. It is the church in which there is most of the presence of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, and the congregation in which there are most 'broken hearts and contrite spirits.' If our eyes were only opened to see invisible things, like the eyes of Elisha's servant, we might discover to our amazement that there is more presence of the King of kings, and consequently more blessing, in some humble unadorned mission room where the Gospel is faithfully preached, than in some of the grandest churches in the land.

There is nothing like testing systems by their results. Let us ask quietly whether there has been any increase of Christian liberality and spiritual-mindedness in the land, in proportion to the enormous increase of attention to external worship. I am afraid the reply will be found very unsatisfactory. In many cases, the money given by a congregation to help missions at home and abroad, and to promote direct work for the salvation of souls in any way, would be found absurdly out of proportion to the money expended on organist, choir, ferns, flowers, and general decoration. Can this be right? And is this a healthy state of things? Does the annual contribution of money for religious purposes throughout England and Wales, in these days of enormously increasing wealth, bear any proportion to the gigantic expenditure on racing, hunting, shooting, yachting, elaborate entertainments, fashion, dancing, and the general round of recreation? Yet all this goes on in the face of an immense increase of external religion! I cannot think this a symptom of a healthy condition.

I shall never forget what an American clergyman said to me not long ago, when I asked him what he thought of the state of Church religion on revisiting England after an absence of some ten years. He told me in reply that while he saw a great increase of music, singing, and ceremonial religion in our public worship, he could not see the slightest increase, but rather a decrease, of true religion among our worshipers. I have a sorrowful suspicion that the American was not far wrong.

The preaching of the pure Word of God is the first mark of a healthy Church. It is sound doctrine taught and preached, and not ritual, which in every age the Holy Spirit has used for awakening sleeping human consciences, building up the cause of Christ, and saving souls. The dens and caves and upper rooms in which the primitive Christians used to meet were doubtless very rough and unadorned. They had no carved wood or stone, no stained glass, no costly vestments, no organs, and no surpliced choirs. But these primitive worshipers were the men who 'turned the world upside down,' and I doubt not that their places of worship were far more honorable in God's sight. It was well and truly said that in those ancient days 'the Church had wooden communion vessels--but golden ministers,' and it was this which gave the primitive Church its power. And when religion began to decay, it was said that the conditions were

reversed; the ministers became wooden--and the communion plate golden.

But I want everything in the English Church in the 19th century to be *golden*. I long to have everywhere golden ministers, golden worship, golden preaching, golden praying, and golden praise. I want everything in the service of God to be done as perfectly as possible, and no part of it to be scamped, slurred over, done carelessly, and left out in the cold. I charge you affectionately, my reverend brethren, to make this your aim. Let the best, brightest, and heartiest services be always accompanied by the best and ablest sermons that your minds can produce and your tongues deliver. Let your sermons be addresses in which Christ's blood, mediation, and intercession; Christ's love, power, and willingness to save; the real work of the Holy Spirit, repentance, faith, and holiness; are never lacking—sermons full of life, and fire, and power; sermons which set hearers thinking, and make them go home to pray. Then, and then only will the Church have its just influence, and God will open the windows of heaven and give us a blessing.

The very best and most elaborate services are only means to an end, and that end should be the salvation of souls. All is not done when people have heard beautiful music and singing, and seen the most ornamental ceremonial. Are their hearts and consciences better? Is sin more hateful? Is Christ more precious? Is holiness more desired? Are they becoming more ready for death, judgment, and eternity every week that they live? These are the grand ends which every clergyman should set before him in every service which he conducts. He should strive to conduct it with an abiding recollection of the eye of God, the sound of the last trumpet, the resurrection of the dead, and the final judgment--and not with the petty thought, 'Is my service bright, hearty, and well done?' That these may be more and more the aims of every clergyman in the present day, is my earnest prayer.

We Must Be Holy!

by J. C. Ryle

Reader,
We must be holy on earth before we die—if we desire to go to heaven after death! If we hope to dwell with God forever in the life to come—we must endeavor to be like Him in the life that now is. We must not only admire holiness, and wish for holiness—we must **be** holy.

Holiness cannot *justify* and *save* us. Holiness cannot cover our iniquities, make satisfaction for transgressions, pay our debts to God. Our best works are no better than filthy rags, when tried by the light of God's law. The righteousness which Jesus Christ brought in, must be our only confidence—and the blood of His atonement, our only hope. All this is perfectly true, and yet *we must be holy*.

We must be holy—because God in the Bible plainly commands it. "As He who has called you is holy—so be holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be holy—for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:15, 16).

We must be holy—because this is one great end for which Christ came into the world. "He died for all, that those who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them, and rose again" (2 Cor. 5:15).

We must be holy—because this is the only sound evidence that we have a saving faith in Christ. "Faith, if it has not works, is dead, being alone." "As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also" (James 2:17, 26).

We must be holy—because this is the only proof that we love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. What can be more plain than our Lord's own words? "If you love Me—keep my commandments." "He who has my commandments, and keeps them—he it is that loves Me." (John 14:15, 21).

We must be holy—because this is the only sound evidence that we are God's children. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." "Whoever does not righteousness is not of God" (Romans 8:14; I John 3:10).

Lastly, we must be holy—because without holiness on earth, we should never be prepared and fit for heaven. It is written of the heavenly glory, "There shall never enter into it anything that defiles, neither whatever works abomination, or makes a lie" (Rev. 21:27). Paul says expressly, "Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord!" (Heb. 12:14).

Ah, reader, the last text I have just quoted is very solemn. It ought to make you think. It was written by the inspiration of God—it is not my private fancy. Its words are the words of the Bible—not of my own invention. God has said it, and God will stand to it: "Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord."

What tremendous words these are! What thoughts come across my mind as I write them down! I look at the world—and see the greater part of it lying in wickedness! I look at professing Christians—and see the vast majority having nothing of Christianity, but the name! I turn to the Bible, and I hear the Spirit saying, "Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord."

Surely it is a text that ought to make you consider your ways, and search your hearts. Surely it should raise within you solemn thoughts, and send you to prayer.

You may try to put me off by saying you *feel* much, and *think* much about these things—far more than many suppose. I answer, This is not the point. The poor lost souls in hell, do as much as this! The great question is, not what you *think* and what you *feel*—but what you DO. *Are you holy?*

You may say, It was never meant that all Christians should be holy, and that holiness such as I have described is only for great saints, and people of uncommon gifts. I answer, I cannot see this in Scripture. I read that "*every* man who has hope in Christ, purifies himself" (1 John 3:3). "Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord."

You may say, It is impossible to be so holy, and to do our duty in this life at the same time—the thing cannot be done. I answer, You

are mistaken—it can be done. With God on your side, nothing is impossible. It has been done by many: Moses, and Obadiah, and Daniel, and the servants of Nero's household, are all examples that go to prove it.

You may say, If you were so holy—you would be unlike other people. I answer, I know it well—it is just what I want you to be. Christ's true servants always were *unlike* the world around them—a *separate* nation, a *peculiar* people; and you must be so too, if you would be saved.

You may say, At this rate, *very few will be saved.* I answer—I know it. Jesus said so eighteen hundred years ago. Few will be saved, because few will take the trouble to seek salvation. Men will not deny themselves the pleasures of sin and their own way for a season; for this they turn their backs on "an inheritance that is imperishable, uncorrupted, and unfading!" "You will not come to Me," says Jesus, "that you might have life" (John 5:40).

You may say, These are hard sayings—the way is very narrow. I answer, I know it! Jesus said so, eighteen hundred years ago. He always said that men must take up the cross daily, that they must be ready to cut off hand or foot—if they would be His disciples. It is in true religion, as it is in other things, "There are no gains without pains." That which costs nothing is worth nothing!

Reader, whatever you may think fit to say, you must be holy—if you would see the Lord in eternal glory. Where is your Christianity, if you are not holy? Show it to me without holiness, if you can. You must not merely have a Christian *name* and Christian *knowledge*, you must have a Christian *character* also. You must be a saint on *earth*—if ever you mean to be a saint in *heaven*. God has said it, and He will not go back, "Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord." "The *Pope's calendar*," says one, "only makes saints of the *dead*; but Scripture requires sanctity in the *living*." "Let not men deceive themselves," says Owen, "sanctification is a qualification indispensably necessary, unto those who will be under the conduct of the Lord Jesus unto salvation. He leads none to heaven—but whom He sanctifies on the earth. This living Head will not admit of dead members!"

Surely you will not wonder that Scripture says, "You must be born again" (John 3:7). Surely it is clear as noon-day, that many of you need a complete change—new hearts, new natures—if ever you are to be saved. Old things must pass away, you must become new creatures! Without holiness, no man, be he who he may—no man shall ever see the Lord.

Reader, consider well what I have said. Do you feel any desire to be holy? Does your conscience whisper, "I am not holy yet—but I would like to become so"? Listen to the advice I am going to give you. May the Lord grant you may take it and act upon it!

Would you be holy? Would you become a new creature? Then *begin with Christ!* You will do just nothing, until you feel your sin and weakness—and flee to Him! He is the beginning of all holiness. He is not only *wisdom* and *righteousness* to His people—but *sanctification* also. Men sometimes try to make themselves holy first—and sad work they make of it! They toil, and labor, and turn over many new leaves, and make many changes—and yet, like the woman with the issue of blood—they feel nothing bettered, but rather worse. They run in vain, and labor in vain! Little wonder, for they are beginning at the wrong end! They are building up a wall *of sand*—their work runs down as fast as they throw it up. They are baling water out of a *leaky* vessel; the leak gains on them; not they on the leak. Other foundation of holiness, can no man lay, than that which Paul laid, even Christ Jesus. Without Christ, we can do nothing. It is a strong but true saying of Traill's, "*Wisdom* outside of Christ—is damning folly! *Righteousness* outside of Christ—is guilt and condemnation! *Sanctification* outside of Christ—is filth and sin! *Redemption* outside of Christ—is bondage and slavery!" "But from Him you are in Christ Jesus--who for us became wisdom from God, as well as righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." 1 Corinthians 1:30

Would you be holy? Would you be partakers of the Divine nature? Then go to Christ! Wait for nothing! Wait for nobody! Do not linger! Think not to make you yourself ready. Go, and say to Him, in the words of that beautiful hymn—

> "Nothing in my hand I bring,
> Simply to Your cross I cling!
> Naked, flee to You for dress;
> Helpless, look to You for grace!"

There is not a brick nor a stone laid in the work of our sanctification, until we go to Christ. Holiness is His special gift to His believing people. Holiness is the work He carries on in their hearts, by the Spirit whom He puts within them. He is appointed a Prince and a Savior, to *give* repentance as well as remission of sins. To as many as receive Him—He gives power to become sons of God. Holiness does not come by blood—parents cannot give it to their children. Holiness does not come by the will of the flesh—man cannot produce it in himself. Holiness does not comes by the will of man—ministers cannot give it you by baptism. Holiness comes from Christ! It is the result of vital union with Him. It is the fruit of being a living branch of the true vine. Go then to Christ, and say, "Lord, not only save me from the *guilt* of sin, but send the Spirit, whom You did promise, and save me from its *power*. Make me holy! Teach me to do Your will."

Would you *continue* holy, when you have once been made so? Then *abide* in Christ. He says Himself, "Abide in Me, and I in you. He who abides in Me, and I in him—brings forth much fruit" (John 15:4, 5).

Jesus is the Physician to whom You must daily go, if you would keep well. He is the Manna which you must daily eat, and the Rock of which you must daily drink. His arm is the arm on which you must daily lean, as you come up out of the wilderness of this world. You must not only be *rooted*, you must also be *built up* in Him.

Reader, may you and I know these things by experience, and not by hearsay only! May we all feel the importance of holiness, far more than we have ever done yet! May our years he *holy* years with our souls, and then I know they will be *happy* ones! But this I say once more, "We must be holy!"

REGENERATION

by J. C. Ryle

"Truly, truly, I say to you—Unless a man is **born again**, he cannot see the kingdom of God." John 3:3

If the Bible is false, as some proud men have dared to say—then we are no better than the beasts which perish, and the best thing a man can do is to eat and drink and live as he pleases. If the Bible is only half true, as some unhappy people strive to make out, there is no certainty about our everlasting souls; Christianity is all doubt and dimness and guesswork, we can never know what we are to believe as necessary to salvation, we can never be sure that we have got hold of the words of eternal life. Give up your Bible, and you have not a square inch of certainty and confidence to stand on: you may think, and you may imagine, and you may have your own opinion—but you cannot show me any satisfactory proof or authority that you are right; you are building merely on your own judgment; you have put out your own eyes, as it were, and, like one in the dark, you do not really know where you are going.

But if, beloved, the Bible be indeed the Word of God Himself and altogether true, and that it is so, can be proved by witnesses without number; if the Bible be indeed true and our only guide to heaven, and this I trust you are all ready to allow; it surely must be the duty of every wise and thinking man to lay to heart each doctrine which it contains, and while he adds nothing to it, to be careful that he takes nothing from it.

Now, I say that on the face of the Bible, when fairly read, there stands out this grand doctrine, that each one of us must, between the cradle and grave—go through a spiritual change, a change of heart—or in other words be born again. And in the text you have heard, the Lord Jesus declares positively, without regeneration no man shall see the kingdom of God.

Sinner, man or woman, mark that! no salvation without this new birth! Christ has done everything for you; He paid the price of our redemption, lived for us, died for us, rose again for us—but all shall avail us nothing, if there be not this work in us: *we must be born again!*

Now, beloved, I desire to speak to you freely and plainly about this new birth—as a thing absolutely necessary to salvation. I shall try to show you from my text two things: *first*, the reason why we must all be born again, and *secondly*, what the expression to be born again means; and the Lord grant that the subject to which I am going to call your attention, may not be listened to and soon forgotten, as a light and indifferent matter—but carried home and thought over, and blessed to the conversion of many souls!

I. Why, then, is this new birth so necessary? The answer is short and simple. Because of the natural sinfulness of every man's disposition. We are not born into the world with spotless, innocent minds—but corrupt and wicked, and with a will to do that which is evil as soon as we have the power. The Scriptural account is true to the letter—we are all conceived in sin and shaped in iniquity. I need not stop now to tell you how all this came to pass; I need only remind you that in the beginning it was not so. Our first parents, Adam and Eve, were created holy, harmless, undefiled, without spot or stain or blemish about them; and when God rested from His labor on the seventh day, He pronounced them, like all His other works, to be very good. But, alas for us! Adam, by transgression, fell into sin, and lost his first estate. He forfeited the likeness of God in which he had been made. And hence all we, who are his children, come into being with a defiled and sinful nature. We are fallen, and we must needs be raised; we have about us the marks of the old Adam—Adam the first, earthly and carnal—and we must needs be marked with the marks of the Second Adam, the Lord Jesus, which are heavenly and spiritual. Do any of you feel a doubt of this? Consider only what we are by nature.

By nature we do not see Christ's spiritual kingdom upon earth; it is all hidden from our eyes. Men may be sharp and knowing in worldly matters, they may be wise in the things of time—but when they come to spiritual religion, their understandings seem blind, there is a thick veil over their hearts, and they see nothing as they ought to see.

So long as they are in this natural state it is in vain they are told of God's holiness and God's unchangeable justice, His spiritual law and His judgment to come, their own enormous deficiencies, their own peril of destruction—it matters not; it all falls flat and dull upon their ears; they neither feel it nor care for it nor consider it, and in a few hours they are as though they had never heard it. It is to no purpose, while in this condition, that Christ crucified and His precious atonement are set before us; we can see no form nor beauty nor loveliness about Him; we cannot value what He has done, and, as far as we are concerned, the wisdom and the excellence of the Cross, which Apostles gloried in, seems all thrown away.

And why is this? Our hearts need changing! "The natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned." This is the true account of all that weariness and lifelessness and carelessness which we so often see in the worshipers of God's house; this is the secret of that awful indifference about spiritual things which prevails so widely both among rich and poor, and makes the Gospel appear a sealed book. It comes from the heart. Some always imagine they need learning, some they have no time, some they have very peculiar difficulties which no one else in the world has—but the truth lies far deeper. They all need new hearts! Once give them new natures, and you would hear no more about learning—or time—or difficulty. Every mountain would be levelled and every valley filled up, that the way of God might be prepared.

But again. By nature we do not love the laws of Christ's spiritual kingdom. We do not openly refuse to obey them, we would be angry with anyone who said we had thrown them aside—but we have no love to them and delight in them; it is not our food and drink to do our Father's will. Oh no! by nature we love our own way and our own inclinations—and that is our only law. We bring forth fruit unto ourselves—but not unto God. Our own pleasure and our own profit take up all our attention, and as for Him who made us and redeemed us, too many do not give Him the very scraps of their time. By nature we do not measure ourselves by God's standard: who ever takes the Sermon on the Mount as his rule of character? who ever admires the poor in spirit, the mourners, the meek, the hungerers and thirsters after righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, the men who are persecuted for righteousness' sake? These are all people whom the world despises, they are as nothing by the side of the jovial and light-hearted, the men who love strong drink and are held to sing good songs; and yet these are the people whom Jesus calls blessed.

What natural man judges of sin as Jesus teaches us to judge? How few look on drunkenness and fornication as damnable sins—yet the Bible says they are! How few consider anger without cause, as bad as murder, and lustful looks as bad as adultery—yet Jesus says they are! Where are the men who strive to love their enemies, who bless those who hate them, and pray for those who despitefully use

them?—yet this is the rule that Jesus has laid down. And why is all this? You see there must be something radically wrong. By nature we do not lay ourselves out to glorify God with our bodies and spirits—we take no pleasure in speaking to each other about Him. The concerns of this world have a hundred times more of our thoughts; and few indeed are the gatherings where the mention of Christ and heaven would not stop many mouths, and make nearly all look as if the subject was very uncomfortable.

And why is all this? Some talk of bad example having done them harm, and some say they have had a bad education—but the evil is far more deeply seated; that which is born of the flesh is flesh, it comes from the carnal unrenewed mind, and the remedy needed is change of nature. A corrupt tree can only bring forth corrupt fruit; the root of the mischief is the sinfulness of the natural heart.

Once more. By nature we are altogether unfit for Christ's kingdom in glory. The **lives** which we are in the habit of leading, and the **practices** we are fond of indulging, and the **tastes** we are always seeking to please, and the **opinions** we hold, are all such as prove we have no natural fitness for the inheritance of the saints in light. They do not follow after holiness in all their walk and conversation. Then what place can they occupy in that blessed abode where there shall enter in nothing that defiles, nor whatever works abomination? How shall they stand in His presence, who charges even His angels with folly, and in whose sight the very heavens are not pure! They do not take pleasure in the exercise of prayer and praise on earth; and how could they enjoy the employments of that glorious habitation, where they rest not day nor night worshiping and crying "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come!"

They do not count it a privilege to draw near to God through Jesus Christ, to walk with Him, to seek close acquaintance with Him; and where would be the comfort to them of dwelling forever in the presence of the Lord God and the Lamb? They do not strive to walk in the steps of holy men of old, they do not take example from the faith and patience of the saints; and with what face then would they join the society of just men made perfect? With what salutation, after a life spent in pleasing the devil and the world, would they greet Abraham and David and the Apostles and all that blessed company who have fought the good fight?

Alas! beloved, an unregenerate man in heaven would be a miserable creature, there would be something in the air he could not breathe, the joys, the affections, the employments would be all wearisome to him, he would find himself as unfitted for the company of the saints, as a beast is unfitted on earth for the company of man. He would be carnally minded, they would be spiritually minded, there would be nothing in common. I know there are vain dreamers who imagine death will work an alteration, that they may die sinners and rise again saints—but it is all a delusion, there is no work nor device nor knowledge in the grave; if we die spiritual we shall rise spiritual, if we die carnal we shall rise carnal, and if we are to be made fit for heaven our natural hearts must be changed now on earth.

In short, beloved, the plain truth is, that by nature men are all dead in trespasses and sins, strangers to the covenant of promise, having no hope and without God in the world, prisoners in the hand of Satan, in a state of miserable condemnation, spiritually dark, blind, and dead; and, worst of all, they neither know nor feel it. The cold corpse in the grave does not feel the worms that crawl over it; the sleeping wretch who has drunk poison, does not know that he shall wake no more; and so also the unhappy man who is still unconverted cannot understand that he is in need of anything. But still, every natural man in the sight of God is dead while he lives; his body, soul, and mind are all turned aside from their proper use, which is to glorify God, and so he is looked upon as dead. And this either is the state of every single soul among us at this minute—or else it used to be. There is no middle state; we cannot be half-way, neither dead nor alive; we were dead and have been brought to life—or we are now dead, and the work is yet to be done.

Nor yet is this doctrine for publicans and harlots only: it is for all without exception; it touches high and low, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, old and young, gentle and simple; all are by nature sinful and corrupt, and because they are so, Jesus tells us solemnly not one shall enter into the heavenly rest without being born again.

Beloved, this sounds strong; it seems a hard saying, perhaps. That is not my concern. I am set to preach Christ's Gospel and not my own. Search the Scriptures, and you will see it is true.

II. The second thing for your consideration is **the exact meaning and force of that peculiar expression "to be born again."** It is a change by which we once more recover something of the divine nature, and are renewed after the image of God. It is a complete transforming and altering of all the inner man; and nothing can more fully show its completeness and importance than the strong figure under which Jesus describes it: He calls it a NEW BIRTH. We have all been born once as men—but we must see to it we are born again as true Christians. We have been born once of the seed of Adam—woe to us if we are not born the second time of the seed of God! We have been born of the flesh—we must also be born of the Spirit. We are born earthly—we must also be born heavenly. We are born corruptible—we must also be born incorruptible. Our natural birth is as necessary to the life of the body—as our spiritual birth is necessary to the life of the soul.

To be born again is, as it were, to enter upon a new existence, to have a new mind and a new heart, new views, new principles, new tastes, new affections, new likings and new dislikings, new fears, new joys, new sorrows, new love to things once hated, new hatred to things once loved, new thoughts of God and ourselves and the world and the life to come, and the means whereby that life is attained. And it is indeed a true saying that he who has gone through it is a new man, a new creature, for old things are passed away—behold, he can say, all things are become new! It is not so much that our natural powers and faculties are taken away and destroyed; I would rather say that they receive an utterly new bias and direction. It is not that the old metal is cast aside—but it is melted down and refined and remolded, and has a new stamp impressed upon it, and thus, so to speak, becomes a new coin.

This is no external change, like that of Herod, who did many things and then stopped—or of Ahab, who humbled himself and went in sackcloth and walked softly; nor is it a change which can neither be seen nor felt. It is not merely a new name and a new notion—but the implanting of a new principle which will surely bear good fruit. It is opening the eyes of the blind and unstopping the ears of the deaf; it is loosing the tongue of the dumb, and giving hands and feet to the maimed and lame—for he who is born again no longer allows his members to be instruments and servants of unrighteousness—but he gives them unto God, and then only are they properly employed.

To be born again is to become a member of a new family by adoption, even the family of God; it is to feel that God is indeed our Father, and that we are made the very sons and daughters of the Almighty; it is to become the citizen of a new state, to cast aside the

bondage of Satan and live as free men in the glorious liberty of Christ's kingdom, giving our King the tribute of our best affection, and believing that He will keep us from all evil. To be born again is a spiritual resurrection, a faint likeness indeed of the great change at last—but still a likeness; for the new birth of a man is a passage from death to life; it is a passage from ignorance of God to a full knowledge of Him, from slavish fear to childlike love, from sleepy carelessness about Him to fervent desire to please Him, from lazy indifference about salvation to burning, earnest zeal; it is a passage from strangeness towards God to heartfelt confidence, from a state of enmity to a state of peace, from worldliness to holiness, from an earthly, sensual, man-pleasing state of mind to the single-eyed mind that is in Christ Jesus. And this it is to be born of the Spirit.

Beloved, time will not allow me to go further with this subject today. I have endeavored to show you generally why we must all be born again, and what the new birth means; and next Sunday, if the Lord wills, I purpose to show you the manner and means by which this new birth usually comes.

It only remains for me now to commend this matter most solemnly to your consciences. Were it a doctrine of only second-rate importance—were it a point a man might leave uncertain and yet be saved, like Church government or election—I would not press it on you so strongly—but it is one of the two great pillars of the gospel. On the one hand stands salvation by free grace for Christ's sake—but on the other stands renewal of the carnal heart by the Spirit. We must be changed as well as forgiven; we must be renewed as well as redeemed.

And I commend this to you all the more because of the times you live in. Men swallow down sermons about Christ's willingness and Christ's power to save, and yet continue in their sins. They seem to forget there must be the Spirit's work within us, as well as Christ's work for us—there must be something written on the table of our hearts. The strong man, Satan, must be cast out of our house, and Jesus must take possession; and we must begin to know the saints' character experimentally on earth—or we shall never be numbered with them in heaven. Christ is indeed a full and sufficient title to heaven—but we must have about us some fitness for that blessed abode.

I will not shrink from telling you that this doctrine cuts every congregation in two; it is the line of separation between the good fish and the bad, the wheat and the tares. There is a natural part in every congregation, and there is a spiritual part; and few indeed are the churches where we should not be constrained to cry, Lord, here are many called—but very few chosen. The kingdom of God is no mere matter of lips and knees and outward service—it must be within a man, seated in the best place of heart; and I will not hesitate to tell you I fear there are many living members of churches who are exceedingly dead professors.

Examine yourselves, then, I pray you, whether you are born again. Have you good solid reasons for thinking that you have put off the old man which is corrupt, and put on the new man which is created after God in holiness? Are you renewed in the spirit of your minds? Are you bringing forth the fruits of the flesh or the fruits of the Spirit? Are you carnally minded or heavenly minded? Are your affections with the world or with God? Are you natural men or are you spiritual men? Oh! but it were no charity in me to keep back this weighty truth; and it will be no wisdom in you to put off and delay considering it.

Are you born again? Without it no salvation! It is not written that you may not—or yet that you will have some difficulty—but it is written that you cannot without it see the kingdom of God. Consider with yourselves how fearful it will be to be shut out; to see God's kingdom afar off, like the rich man in the parable, and a great gulf between; how terrible to go down to the pit from under the very pulpit, well satisfied with your own condition—but still not born again. There are truly many roads to perdition—but none so melancholy as that which is traveled on by professing Christians—by men and women who have light and knowledge and warning and means and opportunity and yet go smiling on as if sermons and holiness were not meant for them—or as if hell was a bed of roses—or as if God was a liar and could not keep His word.

Are you born again? I do not want to fill your heads—but to move your hearts; it is not a matter of course that all who go to church shall be saved; churches and ministers are meant to rouse you to self-inquiry, to awaken you to a sense of your condition; and next to that grand question, "Have you taken Christ for your Savior?" there comes the second point, "Are you born again?"

Beloved, if you love life, search and see what is your condition. What though you find no tokens for good: better a thousand times to know it now and live, than to know it too late and die eternally!

Praised be God, it is a doctrine bound round with gracious promises: no heart so hard but the Holy Spirit can move it; many a one could set his seal to that, and tell you that he was darkness, darkness that could be felt—but is now light in the Lord. Many of the Corinthians were bad as the worst among you—but they were washed, they were sanctified, they were justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God. Many of the Ephesians were as completely dead in sins as any of you—but God quickened them, and raised them up, and created them anew unto good works. Examine yourselves and draw near to God with prayer, and He shall draw near to you—but if you ask not, you shall not have.

As for me, I make my supplication unto God, who can make all things new, that His Spirit may touch your hearts with a deep sense of this truth, for without it my preaching is vain; that there may be a mighty shaking and revival among the dry bones; that you may never rest until you are indeed new men and can say, Verily we *were* dead but we are now alive, we *were* lost but we are now found.

REGENERATION (part 2)

by J. C. Ryle

"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is **born again**, he cannot see the kingdom of God." John 3:3.

Without this new birth, no man or woman can be saved! You may remember I began to speak of it last Sunday morning, and I endeavored to establish in your minds two main points, which it may be well to recall to your recollection now. First, then, I showed you **the reason WHY this new birth is so absolutely necessary to salvation.** It is because of our sinful hearts, our inbred corruption. We are born from the very first with a disposition towards that which is bad; we have no natural readiness to serve God—

it is all against the grain; we have no natural insight into the excellence of Christ's spiritual kingdom, no natural love towards His holy laws or desire to obey them, no natural fitness for heaven; an unrenewed man would be miserable in the company of Jesus and the saints. In short, I said, it is not enough that we are born of the flesh once, natural men; we need to be born the second time of God and become spiritual men—or else we shall never taste eternal life.

I then reminded you of the awful carelessness and indifference and deadness and lukewarmness and coldness and slothfulness about religion which does so widely prevail; and I observed that people were always ingenious in framing reasons and making excuses for their own particular neglect of God, always supposing they had some special difficulty to contend with, which no one else had—business—or poverty, trouble—or family—or lack of time—or lack of learning, and the like—always imagining if these difficulties were taken out of the way, that they would be such good Christians; and I then told you that the root of all these difficulties is the natural old heart; and the thing needed is not leisure and ease and money and learning—but a new heart and a new principle within.

Secondly, I went on to set before you **the NATURE and character of this new birth**. I showed that it was a change not outward only—but inward; not in name only—but in spirit and in truth. It is a change so thorough, so searching, so radical, so complete, that he who has gone through it may be called born again, for he is to all intents and purposes a new man! He was darkness—but he is now light; he was blind—but he can now see; he was sleeping—but he is now awake; he was dead—but he now lives; he was earthly-minded—but he is now heavenly-minded; he was carnal—but he is now spiritual; he was worldly—but he is now godly; he once loved corruptible things best—but he now loves incorruptible things best; he did set his chief affections on that which is mortal—he now sets his heart on that which is immortal.

Lastly, I pressed upon you all **the immense, the surpassing importance of this doctrine**, and I do so now again. I urged you, everyone, to remember—and I repeat it now—it shall avail us nothing that Christ Jesus has brought in righteousness for us, if there be not also the work of the Holy Spirit within us; that it shall profit us nothing to say we are redeemed, if there is not also good evidence that we have been indeed renewed.

I shall now go on, according to my promise, to set before you the first great cause of this new birth, and the means and the manner in which it comes; and I once more pray God that the subject may not be carelessly put aside—but thought over and made useful to all your souls.

I. The first great CAUSE of this new birth. This new birth, then, this great spiritual change—whence does it comes—and how does it begin? Can any man give it to himself when he pleases? Can any change his own heart? No! the thing is impossible. We can no more quicken and impart life to our souls than we can to our bodies; we can no more rise and become new men in our own strength than wash away sins by our own performances. It is impossible! The natural man is as helpless as Lazarus was when he lay still and cold and motionless in the tomb. We may remove the stone, as it were, and expose the sad work of death—but we can do no more. There must be a power far mightier than any power of earth in exercise before the natural man can awake and arise and come forth as a new creature. And to do all this is the special office of the Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit, whom Jesus promised to send. It is He who quickens; it is He who gives life. The Spirit alone can make the seed we scatter bear fruit; the Spirit alone can lay the first foundation of that holy kingdom, which we want to see established in your hearts. It is the Spirit who must move over these waste and barren souls before they can become the garden of the Lord. It is the Spirit who must open the darkened windows of our conscience before the true light can shine in upon those chambers within us. And so, he who is born again is born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man—but of God; for the Spirit is very God.

Beloved, this is a very humbling and solemn truth. The conversion of a sinner can never be that light, off-hand affair that some do seem to think about it. This great change which must come over us can never be a thing so entirely within our reach and grasp that we may put off the old Adam like a cloak, and put on the new man, just when and where we please. Oh—but it is a work that cannot possibly be done without the hand of God! The same Power which first created heaven and earth, and called the fair world around us into being—the same Power alone can create in us new hearts, and renew in us right minds—the same Power alone can convert the natural man into the spiritual.

Yes! you may dream of death-bed repentance, and say, By-and-by we will turn and become Christians—but you know not what you are saying: the softening of the hard heart, and the entrance upon new ways, and the taking up of new principles, is no such easy matter as you seem to imagine—it is work that can only be begun by divine power—and who shall say, that you may not put it off too long?

It is not the plainest and clearest preaching, however lovely it may sound, which can cause men to be born again. Paul may plant and Apollos may water—but the Spirit alone can give the increase! We may raise up congregations fair and formal, and sinews and flesh and skin may cover the dry bones, but they are no better than dead—until the Spirit breathes upon them. Not all the wisdom of Solomon, not all the faith of Abraham, not all the prophecies of Isaiah, not all the eloquence of Apostles, could avail to convert one single soul—without the operation of the Holy Spirit. "Not by might, nor by power—but by my Spirit, says the Lord almighty." And therefore I call this a solemn truth. I know the Spirit is promised to all who ask—but I tremble lest men should loiter and put off their souls' concerns so long, that the Spirit may be grieved—and leave them in their sins.

And still, beloved, solemn as this truth may be to sinners, it is full of consolation to believers; it is full of sweet and unspeakable comfort to all who feel in themselves the holy workings of a new and spiritual nature. These can say with rejoicing, "It is not our right hand nor our arm which has brought us on the way towards Zion; the Lord Himself was on our side; it was He who raised us from the death of sin to the life of righteousness, and surely He will never let us go. Once we were sleeping and dead in trespasses—but the Spirit awakened us and opened our eyes. We caught a sight of the punishment prepared for the ungodly; we heard a voice saying, 'Come unto Me, and I will give you rest,' and we could sleep no longer. And surely we may hope that He, who graciously began the work of grace, will also carry it forward; He laid the foundation, and He will not let it decay; He began, and He will bring His handiwork to perfection."

So much for the great Cause and Giver of the New Birth—the Holy Spirit.

II. The MEANS through which the new birth is ordinarily conveyed, and comes, and the different ways and manners in

which it generally shows itself and produces its wonderful effects.

Now, with respect to the means which the Holy Spirit does ordinarily use, I would not have you for one minute suppose that I wish to limit or set bounds to the Holy One of Israel. I do not for an instant deny that some have been born again without any outward visible machinery having been used—by a sort of secret impulse which cannot be well explained—but I do say that, generally speaking, the Holy Spirit, in giving to a man that blessed thing the new birth, is pleased to work upon his heart more or less by means which our eyes can see and which our minds can understand.

I would not, then, have you ignorant that a man is seldom born again of the Spirit, without *the* ***preaching of the Gospel*** having something to do in the change. This is a special instrument for turning men from darkness to light, and many a one can testify that it was through sermons he was first touched, and brought to the knowledge of the truth. It was Peter's preaching which first touched the men of Jerusalem after our Lord's death, insomuch that they were pricked to the heart and said, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" It was the command which Jesus gave to the apostles before his ascension, they were "to preach unto the people and to testify." It was a cause of joy to Paul, that Christ was preached at Rome: "I therein rejoice," he says, "and will rejoice." It was his own declaration about himself, "Christ Jesus sent me not to baptize—but to preach the Gospel." No means is so blessed in all the experience of Christ's Church as the plain preaching of the Gospel; no sign so sure of decay and rottenness in a Church as the neglect of preaching; for there is no ordinance in which the Holy Spirit is so particularly present, none by which sinners are so often converted and brought back to God. Faith comes by hearing; and how shall men believe—unless they hear? Therefore it is that we press upon you so continually to be diligent in hearing Christ preached; for none are so unlikely to be born again as those who will not listen to the truth.

And seldom too is a man born of the Spirit without the ***Bible*** having something to do in the process. The Bible was written by men who spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit, and he who reads it seriously and attentively—or hears it read, is seeking acquaintance with God in God's own way. You would find few indeed among the Lord's true people who would not tell you that the starting-point in their spiritual life was some saying or doctrine in Scripture; some part or portion, pressed home upon their consciences by an unseen, secret power, was among the first things which stirred them up to think and examine their ways; some plain declaration flashed across their minds and made them say, "If this be true I shall certainly be lost." Therefore it is we tell you over and over again, Search the Scriptures, search the Scriptures; they are the sword of the Spirit, they are the weapon by which the devil is often driven out; and he who leaves his Bible unread does plainly not wish to be born again.

Once more. Never are men born of the Spirit without ***Prayer***. I believe there would not be found a single case of a person who had been quickened and made a new creature without God having been entreated of and inquired of before. Either he has prayed for himself—or some one has prayed for him: so Stephen died praying for his murderers, and by-and-by Saul was converted. The Lord loves to be sought after by His guilty creatures; and they who will not ask for the Holy Spirit to come down upon them, have no right to expect in themselves any real change.

Such, then, beloved, are the means through which this new birth is *generally* given. I say generally, because it is not for me to set bounds to the operations of God; I know men may be startled by sicknesses and accidents and the like—but still I repeat that preaching, the Bible and prayer are the channels through which the Spirit *ordinarily* works. And I say further that in all my life and reading I never heard of a man who diligently, humbly, heartily and earnestly made use of these means, who did not sooner or later find within himself new habits and principles. I never heard of a man steadily persevering in their use, who did not sooner or later feel that sin and he must part company—who did not, in short, become a real child of God, a new creature.

III. So much for the means through which the Spirit generally conveys this new birth. There is yet one point to be considered this morning; and that is **the *particular MANNER* in which this mighty spiritual change does first touch a person and begin.**

Now, on this point I remark, there are great diversities of operations; there is a vast variety in the methods by which the Spirit works, and hence it is that we can never say He is tied down to show himself in one particular way; we must never condemn a person and tell him he is a graceless unconverted sinner because his experience may happen to differ widely from our own.

I would have you note, then, there is great diversity in the **time** and **age** at which this change begins. Some few have the grace of God in them when **very young**; they cannot so much as remember the time when they were without a deep sense of their natural corruption and a lively faith in Christ, and an earnest desire and endeavor to live close to God: such were Isaac and Samuel and Josiah and Jeremiah, and John the Baptist and Timothy. Blessed and happy are these souls; their memories are not saddened by the recollection of years wasted in carelessness and sin; their imaginations are not defiled and stained with the remembrance of youthful wickedness.

But again. Many, perhaps the greater part of true Christians in our day, are never born of the Spirit until they come to age and have reached years of **maturity**. These were once walking after the course of this world, perhaps serving divers lusts and pleasures, perhaps decent outwardly and yet only regarding religion as a thing for Sundays, not as a concern of the hearts. But by some means or other God stops them in their career and turns their hearts back again, and they take up the cross. And bitter indeed is their repentance, and great is their wonder that they could have lived so long in such a fashion, and warm is the love they feel towards Him who has so graciously forgiven them all iniquity.

Once more. Some few, some very few, are first brought unto God and born again in the advance and in **old age**. Oh! but it is fearful to see how few. There are not many who ever arrive at what is called old age; and of these I believe a very insignificant part indeed are ever brought to a saving change. And little wonder if we consider how deeply rooted a thing is habit, how hard it is for those who are accustomed to do evil, to learn to do good. O brethren beloved, youth is the time to seek the Lord! I know that with God nothing is impossible; I know that He can touch the rock that has long been unmoved, if He pleases, and make the water flow—but still we very seldom hear of old men or women being converted: grey hairs are the time for burning the oil of grace and not for buying it, and therefore I say, pray you that your flight be not in the winter of life.

IV. The next thing I would have you note is **the *great diversity in the ways* by which the Spirit, so to speak, does strike the first blow in producing this new birth.**

Some are awakened suddenly, **by mighty providences and interpositions of God**; they despise other warnings, and then the Lord comes in and violently shakes them out of sleep, and plucks them like brands from the burning. And this is often done by unexpected mercies—by extraordinary afflictions and troubles, by sicknesses, by accidents, by placing a man in some great danger and peril; and thousands, I am certain, will tell us in heaven, "It is good for us that we were tried and distressed; 'before I was afflicted I went astray—but now have I kept Your word.'" This was the case with Paul: he was struck to the earth blinded, while going to Damascus to persecute, and he rose up a humbled and a wiser man. This was the case with Jonah: when he fled from the Lord's command, he was awakened by a storm while sleeping on board the ship. This was the case with Manasseh, king of Judah: he was taken prisoner and laid in chains at Babylon, and in his affliction he sought the Lord. This was the case with the jailer at Philippi: he was roused by the earthquake, and came and fell down saying, What shall I do to be saved?" This is the case spoken of by Elihu in the thirty-third chapter of Job. And here is the reason why we ought to feel so anxious about a man, when God has laid His hand upon him and afflicted him. I always feel about such a person, "There is one whom the Lord is trying to convert: will it or will it not be all in vain?"

Again. Some are awakened **suddenly, by very little and trifling things**. God often raises up Christ's kingdom in a man's heart by a seed so small and insignificant, that all who see it are obliged to confess, "This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes." A single text of Scripture sometimes; a few lines in a book taken up by accident; a chance expression or word dropped in conversation, and never perhaps meant by him who spoke it to do so much: each of these seeming trifles has been known to pierce men's hearts like an arrow, after sermons and ordinances have been used without appearing to avail. I have heard of one who could trace up the beginning of his conversion to the saying of a perfect stranger: he was profanely asking God to damn his soul, when the stranger stopped him and said it were better to pray that it might be blessed than damned; and that little word found its way to his heart. Oh, how careful should we be over our lips! Who knows what good might be done if we only strove more to speak a word in season?

Once more. Some are born of the Spirit **gradually and insensibly**. They hardly know at the period what is going on within them; they can hardly recollect any particular circumstances attending their conversion—or fix any particular time—but they do know this, that somehow or other they have gone through a great change, they do know that once they were careless about religion, and now they hold it chief in their affections: once they were blind and now they see. This seems to have been the case with Lydia at Philippi; the Lord gently opened her heart, so that she attended to the things spoken by Paul. This is what Elijah saw in the wilderness; there was the whirlwind and the earthquake and the fire, and after all there was something else—a still small voice. And here is one reason why we sometimes hope and trust that many among the hearers in our congregations may still prove children of God. We try to think that some of you feel more than you seem to do, and that the time is near when you will indeed come out and be separate, and not be ashamed to confess Christ before men.

There is one more diversity I would very shortly notice. Remember there is **diversity in the FEELINGS which the Spirit first excites**: each feeling is moved sooner or later—but they are not moved always in the same order. The new birth shows itself in some by causing exceeding **fear**—they are filled with a strong sense of God's holiness, and they tremble because they have broken His law continually. Others begin with **sorrow**—they can never mourn enough over their past wickedness and ingratitude. Others begin with **love**—they are full of affection towards Him who died for them, and no sacrifice seems too great to make for His sake. But all these works one and the same Spirit—in this man He touches one string, and in that another—but sooner or later all are blended in harmony together, and when the new creation has fully taken place, fear and sorrow and love may all be found at once.

Beloved, time will not allow me to go further with this subject today. I have endeavored to show you this morning who is the Worker, the CAUSE of the new birth: it is not man—but God the Holy Spirit. What are the MEANS through which He generally conveys it: preaching, the Bible, and prayer. And lastly I have shown you there are many DIVERSITIES in His operations: with some He begins when very young, with some in full years, with some few in old age. On some He comes down suddenly and on some gradually, in some He first moves one sort of feelings and in some another—but whatever be His operation, without the Spirit none can be born again.

And now, in CONCLUSION, tell me not that you mean to wait lazily and idly, and if the Lord gives you this blessed change—that is well; and if not—that you cannot help it. God does not deal with you as if you were machines or stones; He deals with you as those who can read and hear and pray, and this is the way in which He would have you wait upon Him.

Never was doctrine so surrounded with **promises and encouragements** and invitations as this. Hear what Jeremiah says: "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people." Again: "They shall be my people, and I will be their God: and I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me forever." Then what Ezekiel says: "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes." Then lastly what the Lord Jesus says: "Ask, and you shall receive; seek, and you shall find: everyone that asks receives. Your Heavenly Father shall give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him." And this is what we want you to do: until you pray for yourselves in earnest, we know there will be little good done; and if any prayerless man shall say in the day of judgment "I could not come to Christ," the answer will be, "You did not try."

Then quench not the Spirit, grieve not the Spirit, resist not the Spirit; His grace has been purchased for you: strive and labor and pray that you may indeed receive it. And then God has covenanted and engaged that He shall come down like rain on the dry ground—like water to wash away your soul's defilement, like fire to burn away the dross and filth of sin, and the hardest heart among you shall become soft and willing as a weaned child.

REGENERATION (part 3)

by J. C. Ryle

"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is **born again**,
he cannot see the kingdom of God." John 3:3

We have reached the last point in our inquiry about the new Birth—I mean the ***MARKS*** and ***EVIDENCES*** by which it may be known—the marks by which a man may find out whether he has himself been born again or not. To set before you the character of those who are indeed new creatures—to warn you against certain common mistakes respecting this doctrine—to wind up the whole subject by appealing to your consciences—this is the work which I propose to take in hand this morning.

Now this point may be last in order—but it certainly is not least in importance. It is the touchstone of our condition; it decides whether we are natural men or spiritual men; whether we are yet dead in trespasses—or have been quickened and brought to see the kingdom of God.

Many there are who take it for granted they have been born again—they do not exactly know why—but it is a sort of thing they never doubted. Others there are who despise all such sifting inquiry—they are sure they are in the right way, they are confident they shall be saved, and as for marks, it is low and legal to talk about them, it is bringing men into bondage. But, beloved, whatever men may say, you may be certain Christ's people are a peculiar people, not only peculiar in their talk—but peculiar in their life and conduct, and they may be distinguished from the unconverted around them; you may be certain there are stamps and marks and characters about God's handiwork by which it may always be known; and he who has got no evidences to show—well well suspect that he is not in the right way.

Now, about these marks I can of course only speak very shortly and very generally, for time will not allow me to do more—but I would first say one word by way of caution. Remember, then, I would not have you suppose that all children of God do feel alike—or that these marks should be equally strong and plain in every case. The work of grace on man's heart is gradual: first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear. It is like leaven: the whole lump is not leavened at once. It is as in the birth of an infant into the world: first it feels, then moves and cries, and sees and hears and knows, and thinks and loves, and walks and talks and acts for itself. Each of these things comes gradually, and in order—but we do not wait for all before we say this is a living soul. And just so is everyone that is born of the Spirit. He may not, at first, find in himself all the marks of God—but he has the seed of them all about him; and some he knows by experience, and all, in the course of time, shall be known distinctly.

But this at least you may be sure of: wherever there is no fruit of the Spirit, there is no work of the Spirit; and if any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His. O that this question might stir up everyone of you to search and try his ways! God is not a man that he should lie; He would not have given you the Bible if you could be saved without it; and here is a doctrine on which eternal life depends: "No salvation without the new birth."

I. First, then, and foremost, I would have you write down in your memories a mark which John mentions in his first epistle: "Whoever makes a **practice of sinning** is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. **No one born of God makes a practice of sinning**, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God. By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not **practice righteousness** is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother." (1 John 3:8-10)

Observe, I would not for one minute have you suppose that God's children are perfect, and without spot or stain or defilement in themselves. Do not go away and say I told you they were pure as angels and never made a slip or stumble. The same John in the same Epistle declares: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. . . . If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us."

But I do say that in the matter of breaking God's commandments, everyone that is born again is quite a new man. He no longer takes a light and cool and easy view of sin; he no longer judges of it with the world's judgment; he no longer thinks a little swearing—or a little Sabbath-breaking—or a little fornication—or a little drinking—or a little covetousness, small and trifling matters—but he looks on every sort of sin against God or man as exceeding abominable and damnable in the Lord's sight, and, as far as in him lies, he hates it and abhors it, and desires to be rid of it root and branch, with his whole heart and mind and soul and strength.

He who is born again has had the eyes of his understanding opened, and the Ten Commandments appear to him in an entirely new light. He feels amazed that he could have lived so long careless and indifferent about transgressions, and he looks back on the days gone by with shame and sorrow and grief. As for his daily conduct, he allows himself in no known sin; he makes no compromise with his old habits and his old principles; he gives them up unsparingly, though it cost him pain, though the world think him over-precise and a fool—but he is a new man, and will have nothing more to do with the accursed thing—sin. I do not say but that he comes short, and finds his old nature continually opposing him—and this, too, when no eye can see it but his own—but then he mourns and repents bitterly over his own weakness. And this at least he has about him: he is at war, in reality, with the devil and all his works, and strives constantly to be free.

And do you call that no change? Look abroad on this world, this evil-doing world: mark how little men generally think about sin; how seldom they judge of it as the Bible does; how easy they suppose the way to heaven—and judge you whether this mark be not exceeding rare. But for all this God will not be mocked, and men may rest assured that until they are convinced of the awful guilt and the awful power and the awful consequences of sin, and, being convinced, flee from it and give it up, they are most certainly not born again.

II. The second mark I would have you note is "**faith in Christ**," and here again I speak in the words of John in his first epistle: "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God." I do not mean by this a general vague sort of belief that Jesus Christ once lived on earth and died—a sort of faith which the very devils possess. I mean, rather, that feeling which comes over a man when he is really convinced of his own guilt and unworthiness, and sees that Christ alone can be his Savior; when he becomes convinced he is in a way to be lost, and must have some righteousness better than his own, and joyfully embraces that righteousness which Jesus holds out to all who will believe. He who has got this saving faith discovers a fitness and suitableness and comfort in the doctrine of Christ crucified for sinners which once he never knew; he is no longer ashamed to confess himself by nature poor and blind and naked, and to take Christ for his only hope of salvation.

Before a man is born of the Spirit there seems no particular loveliness about the Redeemer—but after that blessed change has taken place, He appears the very chief in ten thousand. There is no honor so great but Jesus is worthy of it. There is no love so strong but on Jesus it is well bestowed. There is no spiritual necessity so great but Jesus can relieve it. There is no sin so black but Jesus' blood can wash it away. Before the new birth a man can bow at Christ's name, and sometimes wonder at Christ's miracles—but that is all. Once born again, a man sees a fullness and a completeness and a sufficiency in Christ of things necessary to salvation, so that he feels as if he could never think upon Him enough. To cast the burden of sin on Jesus, to glory in the cross on which He died, to keep continually in sight His blood, His righteousness, His intercession, His mediation; to go continually to Him for peace and forgiveness, to rest entirely on Him for full and free salvation; to make Jesus, in short, all in all in their hopes of heaven—this is the most notable mark of all true children of God—they live by faith in Christ, in Christ their happiness is bound up.

It is the spiritual law of God which brings them to this: time was when they were ready to think well of themselves; the law strips off their miserable garments of self-righteousness, exposes their exceeding guilt and rottenness, cuts down to the ground their fancied notions of justification by their own works, and so leads them to Christ as their only wisdom and redemption; and then, when they have laid hold on Christ and taken Him for their Savior, they begin to find that rest which before they had sought in vain.

Such are two first marks of the Spirit's work—a deep conviction of sin and forsaking of it. And a lively faith in Christ crucified as the only hope of forgiveness. These are marks which the world perhaps may not see—but marks without which no man or woman was ever yet made a new creature. These are the two foundations of the Christian's character, the pillars, as it were, of the kingdom of God; they are hidden roots which others can only judge of by the fruit—but they who have them do generally know it, and can feel the witness in themselves.

III. The third mark of the new birth is "**holiness**." What says the apostle John again? "You know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of him." (1 John 2:29) "And everyone who thus hopes in Him purifies himself as He is pure." (1 John 3:3)

The true children of God delight in making the law their rule of life; it dwells in their minds, and is written upon their hearts, and it is their food and drink to do their Father's will. They know nothing of that spirit of bondage which false Christians complain of; it is their pleasure to glorify God with their bodies and souls, which are His; they hunger and thirst after tempers and dispositions like their Lord's. They do not rest content with sleepy wishing and hoping—but they strive to be holy in their whole life—in thought, in word, and in deed; it is their daily heart's prayer, "Lord what will You have us to do?" and it is their daily grief and lamentation that they come so short and are such unprofitable servants. Beloved, remember where there is no holiness of life there cannot be much work of the Holy Spirit.

IV. The fourth mark of the new birth is **spiritual-mindedness**. We learn this from Paul's words to the Colossians: "If then you were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God." (Colossians 3:1-3)

He who is born again thinks first about the things which are eternal; he no longer gives up the best of his heart to this perishable world's concerns. He looks on earth as a place of pilgrimage, he looks on heaven as his home. And even as a child remembers with delight its absent parents, and hopes to be one day with them, so does the Christian think of his God and long for that day when he shall stand in His presence and go no more out. He cares not for the pleasures and amusements of the world around him. He minds not the things of the flesh—but the things of the Spirit. He feels that he has a house not made with hands eternal in the heavens, and he earnestly desires to be there. "Lord," he says, "whom have I in heaven but You? and there is nothing on earth that I desire beside You."

V. The fifth mark of the new birth is victory over the world. Hear what John says: "Whoever is born of God **overcomes the world**: and this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith."

What is the natural man? A wretched slave to the opinion of this world. What the world says is right he follows and approves; what the world says is wrong he renounces and condemns also. How shall I do what my neighbors do not do? What will men say of me if I become more strict than they? This is the natural man's argument. But from all this, he who is born again is free. He no longer is led by the praise or the blame, the laughter or the frown, of the world. He no longer thinks that the sort of religion which everybody about him professes must necessarily be right. He no longer considers "What will the world say?" but "What does God command?" Oh, it is a glorious change when a man thinks nothing of the difficulty of confessing Christ before men, in the hope that Christ will confess him and own him before the holy angels! The 'fear of the world' is a terrible snare; with many thousands it far outweighs the fear of God. There are men who would care more for the laughter of a company of friends than they would for the testimony of half the Bible. From all this the spiritual man is free. **He is no longer like a dead fish floating with the stream of earthly opinion**; he is ever pressing upwards, looking unto Jesus in spite of all opposition He has overcome the world.

VI. The sixth mark of the new birth is "**meekness**." This is what David meant when he said, in Psalm 131: "My soul is even as a weaned child." This is what our Lord has in view when He tells us we "must be converted and become as little children."

Pride is the besetting sin of all natural men, and it comes out in a hundred different ways. It was pride by which the angels fell and became devils. It is pride which brings many a sinner to the pit—he knows he is in the wrong about religion—but he is too proud to bend his neck and act up to what he knows. It is pride which may always be seen about false professors: they are always saying—We are the men, and we are alone in the right, and ours is the sure way to heaven; and by-and-by they fall and go to their own place and are heard no more of. But he who is born again is clothed with humility; he has a very child-like and contrite and broken spirit; he has a deep sense of his own weakness and sinfulness, and great fear of a fall. You never hear him professing confidence in himself and boasting of his own attainments—he is far more ready to doubt about his own salvation altogether and call himself "chief of sinners." He has no time to find fault with others—or be a busybody about his neighbors. It is enough for him to keep up the conflict with his own deceitful heart, the old Adam within. No enemy so bitter to him as his own inbred corruption.

Whenever I see a man passing his time in picking holes in other Churches, and talking about everyone's soul except his own, I always feel in my own mind, "There is no work of the Spirit there." And it is just this humility and sense of weakness which makes God's

children men of prayer. They feel their own needs and their danger, and they are constrained to go continually with supplication to Him who has given them the Spirit of adoption, crying, Abba Father, help us and deliver us from evil.

VII. The seventh mark of the new birth is a **great delight in all means of grace**. This is what Peter speaks of in his first Epistle: "As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow." This was the mind of David when he said, "A day in Your courts is better than a thousand: I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness."

And oh, what a difference there is between nature and grace in this matter! The natural man has often a form of godliness: he does not neglect the ordinances of religion—but somehow or other the weather—or his health—or the distance, contrives to be a great hindrance to him, and far too often it happens that the hours he spends in church or over his Bible are the dullest in his life.

But when a man is born again, he begins to find a reality about means which once he did not feel: the Sabbath no longer seems a dull, wearisome day, in which he knows not how to spend his time decently; he now calls it a delight and a privilege, holy of the Lord and honorable. The difficulties which once kept him from God's house now seem to have vanished away: dinner and weather and the like never detain him at home, and he is no longer glad of an excuse not to go. Sermons appear a thousand times more interesting than they used to do; and he would no more be inattentive or willingly go to sleep under them, than a prisoner would upon his trial. And, above all, the Bible looks to him like a new book. Time was when it was very dry reading to his mind—perhaps it lay in a corner dusty and seldom read—but now it is searched and examined as the very bread of life; many are the texts and passages which seem just written for his own case; and many are the days that he feels disposed to say with David, "The law of Your mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver."

VIII. The eighth and last mark of the new birth is "**love towards others**." "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God, and knows God. He who doesn't love doesn't know God, for God is love." (1 John 4:7-8)

He who is born of the Spirit loves his neighbor as himself; he knows nothing of the selfishness and uncharitableness and ill-nature of this world. He loves his neighbor's **property** as his own; he would not injure it, nor stand by and see it injured. He loves his neighbor's **person** as his own, and he would count no trouble ill bestowed if he could help or assist him. He loves his neighbor's **character** as his own, and you will not hear him speak a word against it—or allow it to be blackened by falsehoods if he can defend it. He loves his neighbor's **soul** as his own, and he will not allow him to turn his back on God without endeavoring to stop him by saying, "Oh, do not so!" Oh what a happy place would earth be if there was more love! Oh that men would only believe that the gospel secures the greatest comfort in the life that now is, as well as in the life to come!

And such, beloved, are the marks by which the new birth in a man's soul may generally be discovered. I have been obliged to speak of them very concisely, although each one of them deserves a sermon. I commend to your especial attention the two first: conviction and forsaking of sin, and faith in Christ; they are marks on which each must be his own judge. "Have I ever truly repented? Have I really closed with Christ and taken Him for my only Savior and Lord?" Let these questions be uppermost in your mind if you would know whether you are born again or not. The six last marks: holiness, spiritual-mindedness, victory over the world, meekness, delight in means of grace, and love—have this peculiarity about them, that a man's family and neighbors do often see more clearly whether he has them than he does himself—but they all flow out of the two first, and therefore I once more urge the two first on your especial notice.

And now, brethren beloved, in concluding this course of sermons, I desire to speak one word to the consciences of all who have heard them: old or young, rich or poor, careless or thoughtful, you are all equally concerned.

For three Sunday mornings you have heard this new birth set before you—have you ever thought upon your own state and looked within? What of your own hearts? Are you living or dead, natural or spiritual, born again or not? Are your bodies temples of the Holy Spirit? Are your habits and characters the habits and characters of renewed creatures? Oh, search and see what there is within you: the language of the text is plain—no new birth, no kingdom of God!

I know there is nothing popular or agreeable about this doctrine; it strikes at the root of all compromising half-and-half religion, and still it is true. Many would like much to escape the punishment of sin, who will not strive to be free from its power; they wish to be justified but not to be sanctified; they desire much to have God's favor—but they care little for God's image and likeness; their talk is of pardon—but not of purity; they think much about God's willingness to forgive—but little about His warning that we be renewed. But this is leaving out of sight, half the work which Christ died to perform: He died that we might become holy as well as happy, He purchased grace to sanctify as well as grace to redeem; and now forgiveness of sin and change of heart must never be separated. "What God has joined together, let no man presume to put asunder." The foundation of God stands firm: "If any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him."

Beloved, it is easy work to live unto ourselves and take no trouble about religion; the world approves it, and says we shall probably do well at last—but if ever we are to be saved there is another life, and that too on this side the grave, we must live unto God. It is easy to be natural men—we give no offence, and the devil comforts us by saying, as he did to Eve, "You shall not surely die!" But the devil was a liar from the beginning. So long as we are natural men, we are dead already, and we must rise to newness of life. And what know you of the movements of the Spirit? I ask not so much whether you can say which way He came into your hearts—but I do ask whether you can find any real footsteps or traces or tokens of His presence—for "If any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him."

Be not deceived and led away by false opinions. Head-knowledge is not the new birth: a man may know all mysteries like Balaam, and think his eyes are opened; or preach and work miracles and be an Apostle like Judas Iscariot, yet never be born again. Church-membership is not the new birth; many do sit in churches and chapels who shall have no seat in Christ's kingdom; they are not Israel who have the circumcision of the flesh outwardly, they are the true Israel who have the circumcision of the heart, which is inward. There were many Jews in the New Testament days who said, "We have Abraham for our father, and we have the temple among us and that is enough," but Jesus showed them that they only are Abraham's children who have the faith of Abraham and do Abraham's works.

And neither is water-baptism the new birth: it is the sign and seal, and when used with faith and prayer we have a right to look also

for the baptism of the Holy Spirit—but to say that every man who has been baptized has been born again is contrary to Scripture and plain fact. Was not Simon Magus baptized? Yes—but Peter told him after his baptism that he was in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity, his heart not right in the sight of God. "I would not have you ignorant," says Paul to the Corinthians, that all our Fathers were baptized, ... but with many of them God was not well pleased. "Baptism," writes Peter, "does indeed save us"—but what baptism? "not the putting away of the filth of the body, not the washing of water—but the answer of a pure conscience," a conscience made pure by the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Beloved, let no man lead you astray in this matter; let no man make you believe that a baptized drunkard or fornicator or blasphemer or worldling has been born of the Spirit; he has not the marks of the new birth, and he cannot have been born again; he is living in sin and carelessness, and John has given us his character, "he who practices sin is of the devil." Remember, the outward seal is nothing without the inward writing on the heart. No evidence can be depended on, except a new life and a new character and a new creature; and to say that men who lack biblical evidences are born again, is an unreasonable and unscriptural stretch of charity.

And now, in conclusion, if any one of you has reason to think that he still lacks this one thing needful, I entreat that man not to stifle his convictions or nip them in the bud. Do not go away like Cain and silence the voice of conscience by rushing into the vanities of the world; nor dream, like Felix, that you will have a more convenient season than the present. But remember I tell you this day there are two things which make a death-bed especially uncomfortable: first, purposes and promises not performed; and second, convictions slighted and not improved. And if any of you has satisfactory grounds for thinking that he has really tasted something of that saving and necessary change we have considered, I charge that man not to stand still, not to loiter, not to linger, not to look behind him; I warn him that none are in so dangerous a way as those who have become cool and cold and indifferent after real and warm concern about salvation; I urge him to press forward more and more towards the knowledge of Christ, and to remember it is a special mark of God's children that as they grow in age they grow in grace, and feel their sins more deeply and love their Lord and Savior more sincerely.

SELF-INQUIRY

by J. C. Ryle

"Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do." (Acts 15:36).

The text which heads this page contains a proposal which the Apostle Paul made to Barnabas after their first missionary journey. He proposed to revisit the Churches they had been the means of founding, and to see how the were getting on. Were their members continuing steadfast in the faith? Were they growing in grace? Were they going forward, or standing still? Were they prospering, or falling away? "Let us go again and visit our brethren in see how they do."

This was a wise and useful proposal. Let us lay it to heart, and apply it to ourselves in the nineteenth century. Let us search our ways, and find out how matters stand between ourselves and God. Let us "see how we do." I ask every reader of this volume to begin its perusal by joining me in self-inquiry. If ever self-inquiry about religion was needed, it is needed at the present day.

We live in an age of peculiar spiritual privileges. Since the world began there never was such an opportunity for a man's soul to be saved as there is in England at this time. There never were so many signs of religion in the land, so many sermons preached, so many services held in churches and chapels, so many Bibles sold, so many religious books and tracts printed, so many Societies for evangelizing mankind supported, so much outward respect paid to Christianity. Things are done everywhere now-a-days which a hundred years ago would have been thought impossible. Bishops support the boldest and most aggressive efforts to reach the unconverted. Deans and Chapters throw open the naves of cathedrals for Sunday evening sermons! Clergy of the narrowest High Church School advocate special missions, and vie with the Evangelical brethren in proclaiming that going to church on Sunday is not enough to take a man to heaven. In short, there is a stir about religion now-a-days to which there has been nothing like since England was a nation, and which the cleverest skeptics and infidels cannot deny. If Romaine, and Venn, and Berridge, and Rowlands, and Grimshaw, and Hervey, had been told that such things would come to pass about a century after their deaths, they would have been tempted to say, with the Samaritan nobleman, "If the Lord should windows of heavens might such a thing be." (2 Kings 7:19). But the Lord has opened the floodgates of heaven. There is more taught now-a-days in England of the real Gospel, and of the way of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ, in one week, than there was in a year in Romaine's time. Surely I have a right to say that we live in an age of spiritual privileges. But are we any better for it? In an age like this it is well to ask, "How do we do about our souls?"

We live in an age of special spiritual danger. Never perhaps since the world began was there such an immense amount of mere outward profession of religion as there is in the present day. A painfully large proportion of all the congregations in the land consists of unconverted people, who know nothing of heart-religion, never come to the Lord's Table, and never confess Christ in their daily lives. Myriads of those who are always running after preachers, and crowding to hear special sermons, are nothing better than empty tubs, and tinkling cymbals, without a bit of real vital Christianity at home. The parable of the sower is continually receiving most vivid and painful illustrations. The way-side hearers, the stony-ground hearers, the thorny-ground hearers abound on every side.

The life of many religious people, I fear, in this age, is nothing better than a continual course of spiritual dram-drinking. They are always morbidly craving fresh excitement; and they seem to care little what it is if they only get it. All preaching seems to be the same to them; and they appear unable to "see differences" so long as they hear what is clever, have their ears tickled, and sit in a crowd. Worst of all, there are hundreds of young unestablished believers who are so infected with the same love of excitement, that they actually think it a duty to be always seeking it. Insensibly almost to themselves, they take up a kind of hysterical, sensational, sentimental Christianity, until they are never content with the "old paths" and, like the Athenians, are always running after something

new. To see a calm-minded young believer, who is not stuck up, self confident, self-conceited, and more ready to teach than learn, but content with a daily steady effort to grow up into Christ's likeness, and to do Christ's work quietly and unostentatiously, at home, is really becoming almost a rarity! Too many young professors, alas, behave like young recruits who have not spent all their bounty money. They show how little deep root they have, and how little knowledge of their hearts, by noise, forwardness, readiness to contradict and set down old Christians, and over-weaning trust in their own fancied soundness and wisdom! Well will it be for many young professors of this age if they do not end, after being tossed about for a while, and "carried to and fro by every wind of doctrine," by joining some petty, narrow-minded, censorious sect, or embracing some senseless, unreasoning crotchety heresy. Surely, in times like these there is great need for self-examination. When we look around us, we may well ask, "How do we do about our souls?"

In handling this question, I think the shortest plan will be to suggest a list of subjects for self-inquiry, and to get them in order. By so doing I shall hope to meet the case of every one into whose hands this volume may fall. I invite every reader of this paper to join me in calm, searching self-examination, for a few short minutes. I desire to speak to myself as well as to you. I approach you not as an enemy, but as a friend. "My heart's desire and prayer to God is that you may be saved" (Romans 10:1). Bear with me if I say things which at first sight look harsh and severe. Believe me, he is your best friend who tells you the most truth.

(1) Let me ask, in the first place, "DO WE EVER THINK ABOUT OUR SOULS AT ALL?"

Thousands of English people, I fear, cannot answer that question satisfactorily. They never give the subject of religion any place in their thoughts. From the beginning of the year to the end they are absorbed in the pursuit of business, pleasure, politics, money, or self-indulgence of some kind or another. Death, and judgment, and eternity, and heaven, and hell, and a world to come, are never calmly looked at and considered. They live on as if they were never going to die, or rise again, or stand at the bar of God, or receive an eternal sentence! They do not openly oppose religion, for they have not sufficient reflection about it to do so; but they eat and drink, and sleep, and get money, and spend money, as if religion was a mere fiction and not a reality. They are neither Romanists, nor Socinians, nor infidels, nor High Church, nor Low Church, nor Broad Church. They are just nothing at all, and do not take the trouble to have opinions. A more senseless and unreasonable way of living cannot be conceived; but they do not pretend to reason about it. They simply never think about God, unless frightened for few minutes by sickness, death in their families, or an accident. Barring such interruptions, they appear to ignore religion altogether, and hold on to their way cool and undisturbed, as if there were nothing worth thinking of except this world.

It is hard to imagine a life more unworthy of an immortal creature than such a life as I have just described, for it reduces a man to the level of a beast. But it is literally and truly the life of multitudes in England; and as they pass away their place is taken by multitudes like them. The picture, no doubt, is horrible, distressing, and revolting: but, unhappily, it is only too true. In every large town, in every market, on every stock-exchange, in every club, you may see specimens of this class by the scores--men who think of everything under the sun except the one thing needful--the salvation of their souls. Like the Jews of old they do not "consider their ways," they do not "consider their latter end;" they do not "consider that they do evil" (Isaiah 1:3; Haggai 1:7; Deuteronomy 32:29; Ecclesiastes 5:1). Like Gallio they "care for none of these things:" they are not in their way. (Acts 18:17) If they prosper in the world, and get rich, and succeed in their line of life, they are praised, and admired by their contemporaries. Nothing succeeds in England like success! But for all this they cannot live forever. They will have to die and appear before the bar of God, and be judged; and then what will the end be? When a large class of this kind exists in our country, no reader need wonder that I ask whether he belongs to it. If you do, you ought to have a mark set on your door, as there used to be a mark on a plague-stricken house two centuries ago, with the words, "Lord have mercy on us," written on it. Look at the class I have been describing, and then look at your own soul.

(2) Let me ask, in the second place, WHETHER WE EVER DO ANYTHING ABOUT OUR SOULS?

There are multitudes in England who think occasionally about religion, but unhappily never get beyond thinking. After a stirring sermon,--or after a funeral,--or under the pressure of illness,--or on Sunday evening,--or when things are going on badly in their families,--or when they meet some bright example of a Christian,--or when they fall in with some striking religious book or tract,--they will at the time think a good deal, and even talk a little about religion in a vague way. But they stop short, as if thinking and talking were enough to save them. They are always meaning, and intending, and purposing, and resolving, and wishing, and telling us that they "know" what is right, and "hope" to be found right in the end, but they never attain to any action. There is no actual separation from the service of the world and sin, no real taking up the cross and following Christ, no positive doing in their Christianity. Their life is spent in playing the part of the son in our Lord's parable, to whom the father said, "'Go and work today in the vineyard:' and he answered, 'I will, sir,' but he did not go" (Matthew 21:30). They are like those whom Ezekiel describes, who liked his preaching, but never practiced what he preached:--"They come unto you as the people comes, and they sit before you as my people, and they hear your words, but they will not do them. . . .And lo, you are unto them as a very lovely song of one that has a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear your words but they do them not." (Ezekiel 33:31- 32). In a day like this, when hearing and thinking without doing, is so common, no one can justly wonder that I press upon men the absolute need of self-examination. Once more, then, I ask my readers to consider the question of my text,--"How do we do about our souls?"

(3) Let me ask, in the third place, WHETHER WE ARE TRYING TO SATISFY OUR CONSCIENCES WITH A MERE 'FORMAL' RELIGION?

There are myriads in England at this moment who are making shipwreck on this rock. Like the Pharisees of old, they make much ado about the outward part of Christianity, while the inward and spiritual part is totally neglected. They are careful to attend all the services of their place of worship, and regular in using all its forms and ordinances. They are never absent from Communion when the Lord's Supper is administered. Sometimes they are most strict in observing Lent, and attach great importance to Saints' days. They are often keen partisans of their own Church, or sect, or congregation, and ready to contend with any one who does not agree with them. Yet all this time there is no heart in their religion. Anyone who knows them intimately can see with half an eye that their affections

are set on things below, and not on things above; and that they are trying to make up for the want of inward Christianity by an excessive quantity of outward form. And this formal religion does them no real good. They are not satisfied. Beginning at the wrong end, by making the outward things first, they know nothing of inward joy and peace, and pass their days in a constant struggle, secretly conscious that there is something wrong, and yet not knowing why. Well, after all, if they do not go on from one stage of formality to another, until in despair they take a fatal plunge, and fall into Popery! When professing Christians of this kind are so painfully numerous, no one need wonder if I press upon him the paramount importance of close self-examination. If you love life, do not be content with the husk, and shell, and scaffolding of religion. Remember our Savior's words about the Jewish formalists of His day: "These people draws near with their mouth, and honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. In vain do they worship." (Matthew 15:8-9). It needs something more than going diligently to church, and receiving the Lord's Supper, to take our souls to heaven. Means of grace and forms of religion are useful in their way, and God seldom does anything for His church without them. But let us beware of making shipwreck on the very lighthouse which helps to show the channel into the harbor. Once more I ask, "How do we do about our souls?"

(4) Let me ask, in the fourth place, WHETHER WE HAVE RECEIVED THE FORGIVENESS OF OUR SINS?

Few reasonable Englishmen would think of denying that they are sinners. Many perhaps would say that they are not as bad as many, and that they have not been so very wicked, and so forth. But few, I repeat, would pretend to say that they had always lived like angels, and never done, or said, or thought a wrong thing all their days. In short, all of us must confess that we are more or less "sinners," and, as sinners, are guilty before God; and, as guilty, we must be forgiven, or be lost and condemned forever at the last day.-- Now it is the glory of the Christian religion that it provides for us the very forgiveness that we need--full, free, perfect, eternal, and complete. It is a leading article in that well-known creed which most Englishmen learn when they are children. They are taught to say, "I believe in the forgiveness of sins." This forgiveness of sins has been purchased for us by the eternal Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ. He has purchased it for us by coming into the world to be our Savior, and by living, dying, and rising again, as our Substitute, in our behalf. He has bought it for us at the price of His own most precious blood, by suffering in our place on the cross, and making satisfaction for our sins. But this forgiveness, great, and full, and glorious as it is, does not become the property of every man and woman as a matter of course. It is not a privilege which every member of a Church possesses, merely because he is a Churchman. It is a thing which each individual must receive for himself by his own personal faith, lay hold on by faith, appropriate by faith, and make his own by faith; or else, so far as he is concerned, Christ will have died in vain. "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life, and he that believes not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him" (John 3:36). No terms can be imagined more simple, and more suitable to man. As good old Latimer said in speaking of the matter of justification, "It is but believe and have." It is only faith that is required; and faith is nothing more than the humble, heartfelt trust of the soul which desires to be saved. Jesus is able and willing to save; but man must come to Jesus and believe. All that believe are at once justified and forgiven: but without believing there is no forgiveness at all.

Now here is exactly the point, I am afraid, where multitudes of English people fail, and are in imminent danger of being lost forever. They know that there is no forgiveness of sin excepting in Christ Jesus. They can tell you that there is no Savior for sinners, no Redeemer, no Mediator, excepting Him who was born of the Virgin Mary, and was crucified under Pontius Pilate, dead, and buried. But here they stop, and get no further! They never come to the point of actually laying hold of Christ by faith, and becoming one with Christ and Christ in them. They can say, He is a Savior, but not my Savior--a Redeemer, but not my Redeemer--a Priest, but not my Priest--an Advocate, but not my Advocate: and so they live and die unforgiven! No wonder that Martin Luther said, "Many are lost because they cannot use possessive pronouns." When this is the state of many in this day, no one need wonder that I ask men whether they have received the forgiveness of sins. An eminent Christian lady once said, in her old age,-- "The beginning of eternal life in my soul, was a conversation I had with an old gentleman who came to visit my father when I was only a little girl. He took me by the hand one day and said, 'My dear child, my life is nearly over, and you will probably live many years after I am gone. But never forget two things. One is, that there is such a thing as having our sins forgiven while we live. The other is, that there is such a thing as knowing and feeling that we are forgiven.' I thank God I have never forgotten his words."-- How is it with us? Let us not rest until we "know and feel", as the Prayer Book says, that we are forgiven. Once more let us ask, in the matter of forgiveness of sins, "How do we do?"

(5) Let me ask, in the fifth place, WHETHER WE KNOW ANYTHING BY EXPERIENCE OF CONVERSION TO GOD.

Without conversion there is no salvation. "Except you be converted, and become as little children, you shall never enter the kingdom of heaven."-- "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."--"If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His."--"If any man be in Christ he is a new creature." (Matthew 18:3, John 3:3, Romans 8:9, 2 Corinthians 5:17)

We are all by nature so weak, so worldly, so earthly-minded, so inclined to sin, that without a thorough change we cannot serve God in life, and could not enjoy Him after death. Just as ducks, as soon as they are hatched, take naturally to water, so do children, as soon as they can do anything, take to selfishness, lying, and deceit; and none pray or love God, unless they are taught. High or low, rich or poor, gentle or simple, we all need a complete change--a change which is the special office of the Holy Spirit to give us. Call it what you please--new birth, regeneration, renewal, new creation, quickening, repentance--the thing must be had if we are to be saved: and if we have the thing it will be seen.

Sense of sin and deep hatred of it, faith in Christ and love to Him, delight in holiness and longing after more of it, love for God's people and distaste for the things of the world,--these, these are the signs and evidences which always accompany conversion. Myriads around us, it may be feared, know nothing about it. They are, in Scripture language, dead, and asleep, and blind, and unfit for the kingdom of God. Year after year, perhaps, they go on repeating the words of the creed, "I believe in the Holy Spirit;" but they are utterly ignorant of His changing operations on the inward man. Sometimes they flatter themselves they are born again, because they have been baptized, and go to church, and receive the Lord's Supper; while they are totally destitute of the marks of the new birth, as described by John in his first Epistle. And all this time the words of Scripture are clear and plain,--"Except you be converted, you shall

in no case enter the kingdom." (Matthew 18:3).

In times like these, no reader ought to wonder that I press the subject of conversion on men's souls. No doubt there are plenty of sham conversions in such a day of religious excitement as this. But bad coin is no proof that there is no good money: no, rather it is a sign that there is some money current which is valuable, and is worth imitation. Hypocrites and sham Christians are indirect evidence that there is such a thing as real grace among men. Let us search our own hearts then, and see how it is with ourselves. Once more let us ask, in the matter of conversion, "How do we do?"

(6) Let me ask, in the sixth place, WHETHER WE KNOW ANYTHING OF PRACTICAL CHRISTIAN HOLINESS?

It is as certain as anything in the Bible that "without holiness no one will see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14). It is equally certain that it is the invariable fruit of saving faith, the real test of regeneration, the only sound evidence of indwelling grace, the certain consequence of vital union with Christ.

Holiness is not absolute perfection and freedom from all faults. Nothing of the kind! The wild words of some who talk of enjoying "unbroken communion with God for many months, are greatly to be deprecated, because they raise unscriptural expectations in the minds of young believers, and so do harm. Absolute perfection is for heaven, and not for earth, where we have a weak body, a wicked world, and a busy devil continually near our souls. Nor is real Christian holiness ever attained, or maintained, without a constant fight and struggle. The great Apostle, who said "I fight,-I labor,-I keep under my body and bring it into subjection" (1 Corinthians 9:27), would have been amazed to hear of sanctification without personal exertion, and to be told that believers only need to sit still, and everything will be done for them!

Yet, weak and imperfect as the holiness of the best saints may be, it is a real true thing, and has a character about it as unmistakable as light and salt. It is not a thing which begins and ends with noisy profession: it will be seen much more than heard. Genuine Scriptural holiness will make a man do his duty at home and by the fireside, and adorn his doctrine in the little trials of daily life. It will exhibit itself in passive graces as well as in active. It will make a man humble, kind, gentle, unselfish, good-tempered, considerate of others, loving, meek, and forgiving. It will not constrain him to go out of the world, and shut himself up in a cave, like a hermit. But it will make him do his duty in that state to which God has called him, on Christian principles, and after the pattern of Christ.

Such holiness, I know well, is not common. It is a style of practical Christianity which is painfully rare in these days. But I can find no other standard of holiness in the Word of God,- no other which comes up to the pictures drawn by our Lord and His Apostles. In an age like this no reader can wonder if I press this subject also on men's attention. Once more let us ask--In the matter of holiness, how is it with our souls? "How do we do?"

(7) Let me ask, in the seventh place, WHETHER WE KNOW ANYTHING OF ENJOYING THE MEANS OF GRACE?

When I speak of the means of grace, I have in my mind's eye five principal things: the Reading of the Bible, private prayer, public worship, the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and the rest of the Lord's day.

They are means which God has graciously appointed in order to convey grace to man's heart by the Holy Spirit, or to keep up the spiritual life after it has begun. As long as the world stands, the state of a man's soul will always depend greatly on the manner and spirit in which he uses means of grace. The manner and spirit, I say deliberately and of purpose. Many English people use the means of grace regularly and formally, but know nothing of enjoying them: they attend to them as a matter of duty, but without a jot of feeling, interest, or affection. Yet even common sense might tell us that this formal, mechanical use of holy things is utterly worthless and unprofitable. Our feeling about them is just one of the many tests of the state of our souls. How can that man be thought to love God who reads about Him and His Christ as a mere matter of duty, content and satisfied if he has just moved his mark onward over so many chapters?- How can that man suppose he is ready to meet Christ who never takes any trouble to pour out his heart to Him in private as a Friend, and is satisfied with saying over a string of words every morning and evening, under the name of "prayer", scarcely thinking what he is about?- How could that man be happy in heaven forever who finds Sunday a dull, gloomy, tiresome day,-who knows nothing of hearty prayer and praise, and cares nothing whether he hears truth or error from the pulpit, or scarcely listens to the sermon?- What can be the spiritual condition of that man whose heart never "burns within him," when he receives that bread and wine which specially remind us of Christ's death on the cross, and the atonement for sin?

These inquiries are very serious and important. If means of grace had no other use, and were not mighty helps toward heaven, they would be useful in supplying a test of our real state in the sight of God. Tell me what a man does in the matter of Bible reading and praying, in the matter of Sunday, public worship, and the Lord's Supper, and I will soon tell you what he is, and on which road he is traveling. How is it with ourselves? Once more let us ask--In the matter of means of grace, "How do we do?"

(8) Let me ask, in the eighth place, WHETHER WE EVER TRY TO DO ANY GOOD IN THE WORLD?

Our Lord Jesus Christ was continually "going around doing good," while He was on earth (Acts 10:38). The Apostles, and all the disciples in Bible times, were always striving to walk in His steps. A Christian who was content to go to heaven himself and cared not what became of others, whether they lived happy and died in peace or not, would have been regarded as a kind of monster in primitive times, who did not have the Spirit of Christ. Why should we suppose for a moment that a lower standard will suffice in the present day? Why should fig trees which bear no fruit be spared in the present day, when in our Lord's time they were to be cut down as "cumberers of the ground"? (Luke 13:7). These are serious inquiries, and demand serious answers.

There is a generation of professing Christians now-a-days, who seem to know nothing of caring for their neighbors, and are

completely swallowed up in the concerns of number one--that is, their own and their family's. They eat, and drink, and sleep, and dress, and work, and earn money, and spend money, year after year; and whether others are happy or miserable, well or ill, converted or unconverted, traveling towards heaven or toward hell, appear to be questions about which they are supremely indifferent. Can this be right? Can it be reconciled with the religion of Him who spoke the parable of the good Samaritan, and bade us "go and do likewise"? (Luke 10:37). I doubt it altogether.

There is much to be done everywhere. There is not a place in England where there is not a field for work and an open door for being useful, if any one is willing to enter it. There is not a Christian in England who cannot find some good work to do for others, if he has only a heart to do it. The poorest man or woman, without a single penny to give, can always show his deep sympathy to the sick and sorrowful, and by simple good-nature and tender helpfulness can lessen the misery and increase the comfort of somebody in this troubled world. But alas, the vast majority of professing Christians, whether rich or poor, Churchmen or Dissenters, seem possessed with a devil of detestable selfishness, and do not know the luxury of doing good. They can argue by the hour about baptism, and the Lord's supper, and the forms of worship, and the union of Church and State, and such-like dry-bone questions. But all this time they seem to care nothing for their neighbors. The plain practical point, whether they love their neighbor, as the Samaritan loved the traveler in the parable, and can spare any time and trouble to do him good, is a point they never touch with one of their fingers.

In too many English parishes, both in town and country, true love seems almost dead, both in church and chapel, and wretched party-spirit and controversy are the only fruits that Christianity appears able to produce. In a day like this, no reader should wonder if I press this plain old subject on his conscience. Do we know anything of genuine Samaritan love to others? Do we ever try to do any good to any one beside our own friends and relatives, and our and our own party or cause? Are we living like disciples of Him who always "went about doing good," and commanded His disciples to take Him for their "example"? (John 13:15). If not, with what face shall we meet Him in the judgment day? In this matter also, how is it with our souls? Once more I ask, "How do we do?"

(9) Let me ask, in the ninth place, WHETHER WE KNOW ANYTHING OF LIVING THE LIFE OF HABITUAL COMMUNION WITH CHRIST?

By "communion," I mean that habit of "abiding in Christ" which our Lord speaks of, in the fifteenth chapter of John's Gospel, as essential to Christian fruitfulness (John 15:4-8). Let it be distinctly understood that union with Christ is one thing, and communion is another. There can be no communion with the Lord Jesus without union first; but unhappily there may be union with the Lord Jesus, and afterwards little or no communion at all. The difference between the two things is not the difference between two distinct steps, but the higher and lower ends of an inclined plane. Union is the common privilege of all who feel their sins, and truly repent, and come to Christ by faith, and are accepted, forgiven, and justified in Him. Too many believers, it may be feared, never get beyond this stage! Partly from ignorance, partly from laziness, partly from the fear of man, partly from secret love of the world, partly from some unmortified besetting sin, they are content with a little faith, and a little hope, and a little peace, and a little measure of holiness. And they live on all their lives in this condition, doubting, weak, hesitant, and bearing fruit only "thirty-fold" to the very end of their days!

Communion with Christ is the privilege of those who are continually striving to grow in grace, and faith, and knowledge, and conformity to the mind of Christ in all things--who "forget what is behind," and "do not consider themselves yet to have taken hold of it, but "press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 3:13-14) Union is the bud, but communion is the flower: union is the baby, but communion is the strong man. He that has union with Christ does well; but he that enjoys communion with Him does far better. Both have one life, one hope, one heavenly seed in their hearts,--one Lord, one Savior, one Holy Spirit, one eternal home: but union is not as good as communion! The grand secret of communion with Christ is to be continually "living the life of faith in Him," and drawing out of Him every hour the supply that every hour requires. To me, said St. Paul, "to live is Christ."--I live: yet not I, but Christ lives in me (Galatians 2:20; Philippians 1:21). Communion like this is the secret of the abiding "joy and peace in believing," which eminent saints like Bradford and Rutherford notoriously possessed. None were ever more humble, or more deeply convinced of their own infirmities and corruption. They would have told you that the seventh chapter of Romans precisely described their own experience. They would have endorsed every word of the "Confession" put into the mouths of true believers, in our Prayer-book Communion Service. They would have said continually, "The remembrance of our sins is grievous to us; the burden of them is intolerable." But they were ever looking unto Jesus, and in Him they were ever able to rejoice.--Communion like this is the secret of the splendid victories which such men as these won over sin, the world, and the fear of death. They did not sit still idly, saying, "I leave it all to Christ to do for me," but, strong in the Lord, they used the Divine nature He had implanted in them, boldly and confidently, and were "more than conquerors through Him who loved them." (Romans 8:37). Like St. Paul they would have said, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." (Philippians 4:13).

Ignorance of this life of communion is one among many reasons why so many in this age are hankering after the Confessional, and strange views of the "real presence" in the Lord's Supper. Such errors often spring from imperfect knowledge of Christ, and obscure views of the life of faith in a risen, living, and interceding Savior. Is communion with Christ like this a common thing? Alas! It is very rare indeed! The greater part of believers seem content with the barest elementary knowledge of justification by faith, and half-a-dozen other doctrines, and go doubting, limping, halting, groaning along the way to heaven, and experience little of the sense of victory or of joy.

The Churches of these latter days are full of weak, powerless, and uninfluential believers, saved at last, "but so as by fire," but never shaking the world, and knowing nothing of an "abundant entrance." (1 Corinthians 3:15; 2 Peter 1:11). Despondency and Feeble-mind and Much-afraid, in "Pilgrim's Progress," reached the celestial city as really and truly as Valiant-for-the-truth and Greatheart. But they certainly did not reach it with the same comfort, and did not do a tenth part of the same good in the world! I fear there are many like them in these days! When things are so in the Churches, no reader can wonder that I inquire how it is with our souls. Once more I ask--In the matter of communion with Christ, "How do we do? (10) Let me ask, in the tenth and last place, whether we know anything of being ready for Christ's second coming?

That He will come again the second time is as certain as anything in the Bible. The world has not yet seen the last of Him. As surely as

He went up visibly and in the body on the Mount of Olives before the eyes of His disciples, so surely will he come again in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory (Acts 1:11). He will come to raise the dead, to change the living, to reward His saints, to punish the wicked, to renew the earth, and take the curse away--to purify the world, even as He purified the temple--and to set up a kingdom where sin shall have no place, and holiness shall be the universal rule. The Creeds which we repeat and profess to believe, continually declare that Christ is coming again.

The early Christians made it a part of their religion to look for His return. Backward they looked to the cross and the atonement for sin, and rejoiced in Christ crucified. Upward they looked to Christ at the right hand of God, and rejoiced in Christ interceding. Forward they looked to the promised return of their Master, and rejoiced in the thought that they would see Him again. And we ought to do the same. What have we really got from Christ? And what do we know of Him? And what do we think of Him? Are we living as if we long to see Him again, and love His appearing?-- Readiness for that appearing is nothing more than being a real, consistent Christian. It requires no man to cease from his daily business. The farmer need not give up his farm, nor the shopkeeper his counter, nor the doctor his patients, nor the carpenter his hammer and nails, nor the bricklayer his mortar and trowel, nor the blacksmith his smithy. Each and all cannot do better than be found doing his duty, but doing it as a Christian, and with a heart packed up and ready to be gone. In the face of truth like this no reader can feel surprised if I ask, How is it with our souls in the matter of Christ's second coming? The world is growing old and running to seed. The vast majority of Christians seem like the men in the time of Noah and Lot, who were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, planting and building, up to the very day when flood and fire came. Those words of our Master are very solemn and heart-searching, "Remember Lot's wife."--"Take heed lest at any time your heart be overcharged with the cares of this life, and that day come upon you unawares." (Luke 17:32; 21:34). Once more I ask--In the matter of readiness for Christ's second coming, "How are we doing?

I end my inquiries here. I might easily add to them; but I trust I have said enough, at the beginning of this volume, to stir up self-inquiry and self-inquiry and self-examination in many minds. God is my witness that I have said nothing that I do not feel of paramount importance to my own soul. I only want to do good to others.

Let me now conclude all with a few words of PRACTICAL APPLICATION.

(A) IS ANY READER OF THIS PAPER ASLEEP AND UTTERLY THOUGHTLESS ABOUT CHRISTIANITY?

Oh, awake and sleep no more! Look at the churchyards and cemeteries. One by one the people around you are dropping into them, and you must lie there one day. Look forward to a world to come, and lay your hand on your heart, and say, if you dare, that you ready to die and meet God. Ah! You are like one sleeping in a boat drifting down the stream towards the falls of Niagara! "What meanest you, oh sleeper! Arise and call on your God!"--"Awake you that sheep, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light!"" (Jonah 1:6; Ephesians 5:14).

(B) IS ANY READER OF THIS PAPER FEELING SELF-CONDEMNED, AND AFRAID THAT THERE IS NO HOPE FOR HIS SOUL?

Cast aside your fears, and accept the offer of our Lord Jesus Christ to sinners. Hear Him saying, "Come unto me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28). "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." (John 7:37). Him that comes unto me I will in no wise cast out." (John 6:37).

Doubt not that these words are for you as well as for anyone else. Bring all your sins, and unbelief, and sense of guilt, and unfitness, and doubts, and infirmities--bring all to Christ. "This man receives sinners," and He will receive you (Luke 15:2). Do not stand still, wavering between two opinions, and waiting for a convenient season. On your feet! He's calling you. Come to Christ this very day (Mark 10:49).

(C) IS ANY READER OF THIS PAPER A PROFESSING BELIEVER IN CHRIST, BUT A BELIEVER WITHOUT MUCH JOY AND PEACE AND COMFORT?

Take advice this day. Search your own heart, and see whether the fault is not entirely your own. Very likely you are sitting at ease, content with a little faith, and a little repentance, a little grace and a little sanctification, and unconsciously shrinking back from extremes. You will never be a very happy Christian at this rate, if you live to the age of Methuselah. Change your plan, if you love life and would see good days, without delay. Come out boldly, and act decidedly. Be thorough, thorough, very through in your Christianity, and set your face fully towards the sun. Lay aside every weight, and the sin that does so easily beset you. Strive to get nearer to Christ, to abide in Him, to cleave to Him, and to sit at His feet like Mary, and drink full draughts out of the fountain of life. "These things," says St. John, "we write unto you that your joy may be full." (1 John 1:4). "If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another." (1 John 1:7). (d) Is any reader of this paper a believer oppressed with doubts and fears, on account of his feebleness, infirmity, and sense of sin?

Remember the text that says of Jesus, A bruised reed will He not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench." (Matthew 12:20). Take comfort in the thought that this text is for you. What though your faith be weak? It is better than no faith at all. The least grain of life is better than death. Perhaps you are expecting too much in this world. Earth is not heaven. You are yet in the body. Expect little from self, but much from Christ. Look more to Jesus, and less to self.

(D) FINALLY, IS ANY READER OF THIS PAPER SOMETIMES DOWNCAST BY THE TRIALS HE MEETS WITH ON THE WAY TO HEAVEN, BODILY TRIALS, FAMILY TRIALS, TRIALS OF CIRCUMSTANCES, TRIALS FROM NEIGHBORS, AND TRIALS FROM THE WORLD?

Look up to a sympathizing Savior at God's right hand, and pour out your heart before Him. He can be touched with the feelings of your trials, for He Himself suffered when He was tempted. Are you alone? So was He. Are you misrepresented and slandered? So was He. Are you forsaken by friends? So was He. Are you persecuted? So was He. Are you wearied in body and grieved in spirit? So was He. Yes! He can feel for you, and He can help as well as feel. Then learn to draw nearer to Christ. The time is short. Yet in a little while, and all will be over: we shall soon be "with the Lord". "There is an end, and your expectation shall not be cut off." (Proverbs 23:18). "You have need of patience, that, after you have done the will of God, you might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come and will not tarry." (Hebrews 10:36-37).

The Duties of Parents

by J. C. Ryle

Introduction

"Train up a child in the way he should go—and when he is old, he will not depart from it." Proverbs 22:6

I suppose that most professing Christians are acquainted with the text at the head of this page. The sound of it is probably familiar to your ears, like an old tune. It is likely you have heard it, or read it, talked of it, or quoted it, many a time. Is it not so?

But, after all, how little is the substance of this text regarded! The doctrine it contains appears scarcely known, the duty it puts before us seems fearfully seldom practiced. Reader, do I not speak the truth?

It cannot be said that the subject is a new one. The world is old, and we have the experience of nearly six thousand years to help us. We live in days when there is a mighty zeal for education in every quarter. We hear of new schools rising on all sides. We are told of new systems, and new books for the young, of every sort and description. And still for all this, the vast majority of children are manifestly not trained in the way they should go, for when they grow up to man's estate, they do not walk with God.

Now how shall we account for this state of things? The plain truth is, the Lord's commandment in our text is not regarded—and therefore the Lord's promise in our text is not fulfilled.

Reader, these things may well give rise to great searchings of heart. Permit then a word of exhortation from a minister, about the right training of children. Believe me, the subject is one that should come home to every conscience, and make every one ask himself the question, "Am I in this matter doing what I can?"

It is a subject that concerns almost all. There is hardly a household that it does not touch. Parents, teachers, uncles, aunts, brothers, sisters—all have an interest in it. Few can be found, I think, who might not influence some parent in the management of his family, or affect the training of some child by suggestion or advice. All of us, I suspect, can do something here, either directly or indirectly, and I wish to stir up all to bear this in remembrance.

It is a subject, too, on which all concerned are in great danger of coming short of their duty. This is preeminently a point in which men can see the faults of their neighbors more clearly than their own. They will often bring up their children in the very path which they have denounced to their friends as unsafe. They will see motes in other men's families, and overlook beams in their own. They will be quick sighted as eagles in detecting mistakes abroad, and yet blind as bats to fatal errors which are daily going on at home. They will be wise about their brother's house, but foolish about their own flesh and blood. Here, if anywhere, we have need to suspect our own judgment. This, too, you will do well to bear in mind.

As a minister, I cannot help remarking that there is hardly any subject about which people seem so tenacious as they are about their children. I have sometimes been totally astonished at the slowness of sensible Christian parents to admit that their own children are in fault, or deserve blame. There are not a few people to whom I would far rather speak about their own sins—than tell them their children had done anything wrong.

Come now, and let me place before you a few hints about right training. God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit bless them, and make them words in season to you all. Reject them not because they are blunt and simple; despise them not because they contain nothing new. Be very sure, if you would train children for heaven, they are hints that ought not to be lightly set aside.

1. First, then, if you would train your children rightly, train them in the way they SHOULD go—and not in the way that they desire.

Remember—**children are born with a decided bias towards evil**—and therefore if you let them choose for themselves, they are certain to choose wrong.

The mother cannot tell what her tender infant may grow up to be—tall or short, weak or strong, wise or foolish—he may be any of these things or not—it is all uncertain. But one thing the mother can say with certainty—he will have a corrupt and sinful heart! It is natural to us to do wrong. "Foolishness," says Solomon, "is bound in the heart of a child" (Proverbs 22:15). "A child left to himself brings his mother to shame" (Proverbs 29:15). **Our hearts are like the earth on which we tread; let it alone, and it is sure to bear weeds.**

If, then, you would deal wisely with your child, you must not leave him to the guidance of his own will. Think for him, judge for him, act for him, just as you would for one weak and blind; but for pity's sake, give him not up to his own wayward tastes and inclinations. It must not be his likings and wishes that are consulted. He knows not yet what is good for his mind and soul, any more than what is good for his body. You do not let him decide what he shall eat, and what he shall drink, and how he shall be clothed. Be consistent, and deal with his mind in like manner. **Train him in the way that is scriptural and right, and not in the way that he desires.**

If you cannot make up your mind to this first principle of Christian training—it is useless for you to read any further. **Self-will** is almost the first thing that appears in a child's mind—and it must be your first step to resist it.

2. Train up your child with all tenderness, affection, and patience.

I do not mean that you are to spoil him—but I do mean that you should let him see that you love him.

Love should be the silver thread that runs through all your conduct! Kindness, gentleness, long-suffering, forbearance, patience, sympathy, a willingness to enter into childish troubles, a readiness to take part in childish joys—these are the cords by which a child may be led most easily—these are the clues you must follow if you would find the way to his heart.

Few are to be found, even among grown-up people, who are not more easy to draw than to drive. There is that in all our minds which rises in arms against compulsion; we set up our backs and stiffen our necks at the very idea of a forced obedience. We are like young horses in the hand of a breaker—handle them kindly, and make much of them, and by and by you may guide them with thread; use them roughly and violently, and it will be many a month before you get the mastery of them at all.

Now children's minds are cast in much the same mold as our own. Sternness and severity of manner chill them and throw them back. It shuts up their hearts, and you will weary yourself to find the door. But let them only see that you have an affectionate feeling towards them—that you are really desirous to make them happy, and do them good—that if you punish them, it is intended for their profit, and that, like the pelican, you would give your heart's blood to nourish their souls; let them see this, I say, and they will soon be all your own. But they must be wooed with kindness, if their attention is ever to be won.

And surely reason itself might teach us this lesson. Children are weak and tender creatures, and, as such, they need patient and considerate treatment. We must handle them delicately, like frail machines, lest by rough fingering we do more harm than good. They are like young plants, and need gentle watering—often, but little at a time.

We must not expect all things at once. We must remember what children are—and teach them as they are able to bear. Their minds are like a lump of metal—not to be forged and made useful at once, but only by a succession of little blows. Their understandings are like narrow-necked vessels—we must pour in the wine of knowledge gradually, or much of it will be spilled and lost. "Line upon line, and precept upon precept, here a little and there a little," must be our rule. The whetstone does its work slowly, but frequent rubbing will bring the scythe to a fine edge. Truly there is need of patience in training a child, but without it nothing can be done.

Nothing will compensate for the absence of this tenderness and love! A minister may speak the truth as it is in Jesus, clearly, forcibly, unanswerably; but if he does not speak it in love, few souls will be won. Just so you must set before your children their duty—command, threaten, punish, reason—but if **affection** be lacking in your treatment, your labor will be all in vain.

Love is one grand secret of successful training! Anger and harshness may frighten, but they will not persuade the child that you are right; and if he sees you often out of temper, you will soon cease to have his respect. A father who speaks to his son as Saul did to Jonathan (1 Sam. 20:30), need not expect to retain his influence over that son's mind.

Try hard to keep up a hold on your child's affections. It is a dangerous thing to make your children afraid of you. Anything is almost better than reserve and constraint between your child and yourself; and this will come in with fear. Fear puts an end to openness of manner—fear leads to concealment—fear sows the seed of much hypocrisy, and leads to many a lie. There is a mine of truth in the Apostle's words to the Colossians—"Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged" (Col. 3:21). Let not the advice it contains be overlooked.

3. Train your children with an abiding persuasion on your mind that much depends upon you.

Grace is the strongest of all principles. See what a revolution grace effects when it comes into the heart of an old sinner—how it overturns the strongholds of Satan—how it casts down mountains, fills up valleys—makes crooked things straight—and new creates the whole man. Truly nothing is impossible to grace.

Nature, too, is very strong. See how it struggles against the things of the kingdom of God—how it fights against every attempt to be more holy—how it keeps up an unceasing warfare within us to the last hour of life. Nature indeed is strong.

But after nature and grace, undoubtedly, there is nothing more powerful than education. **Early habits** (if I may so speak) are everything with us, under God. **We are made what we are by early training. Our character takes the form of that mold into which our first years are cast.**

"He has seen but little of life who does not discern everywhere the effect of education on men's opinions and habits of thinking. **The children bring out of the nursery that which displays itself throughout their lives!**"—Cecil.

We depend, in a vast measure, on those who bring us up. We get from them a color, a taste, a bias which cling to us more or less all

our lives. We catch the language of our nurses and mothers, and learn to speak it almost insensibly, and unquestionably we catch something of their manners, ways, and mind at the same time. Time only will show, I suspect, how much we all owe to early impressions, and how many things in us may be traced up to seeds sown in the days of our very infancy, by those who were about us. A very learned Englishman, Mr. Locke, has gone so far as to say—"That of all the men we meet with, nine parts out of ten are what they are, good or bad, useful or not, according to their education."

And all this is one of God's merciful arrangements. He gives your children a mind that will receive impressions like moist clay. He gives them a disposition at the starting-point of life to believe what you tell them, and to take for granted what you advise them, and to trust your word rather than a stranger's. He gives you, in short, a golden opportunity of doing them good. See that the opportunity is not neglected, and thrown away. Once let slip, it is gone forever.

Beware of that miserable delusion into which some have fallen—that parents can do nothing for their children, that you must leave them alone, wait for grace, and sit still. These people have wishes for their children in Balaam's fashion—they would like them to die the death of the righteous man, but they do nothing to make them live his life. They desire much, and have nothing. And the devil rejoices to see such reasoning, just as he always does over anything which seems to excuse indolence, or to encourage neglect of means.

I know that you cannot convert your child. I know well that they who are born again are born, not of the will of man, but of God. But I know also that God says expressly, "Train up a child in the way he should go," and that He never laid a command on man which He would not give man grace to perform. And I know, too, that our duty is not to stand still and dispute, but to go forward and obey. It is just in the going forward that God will meet us. The path of obedience is the way in which He gives the blessing. We have only to do as the servants were commanded at the marriage feast in Cana, to fill the water-pots with water, and we may safely leave it to the Lord to turn that water into wine.

4. Train with this thought continually before your eyes—that the SOUL of your child is the first thing to be considered.

Precious, no doubt, are these little ones in your eyes; but **if you love them, think often of their souls.** No interest should weigh with you so much as their eternal interests. No part of them should be so dear to you as that part which will never die. The world, with all its glory, shall pass away; the hills shall melt; the heavens shall be wrapped together as a scroll; the sun shall cease to shine. But the spirit which dwells in those little creatures, whom you love so well, shall outlive them all, and whether in happiness or misery (to speak as a man) will depend on you.

This is the thought that should be uppermost on your mind in all you do for your children. In every step you take about them, in every plan, and scheme, and arrangement that concerns them, do not leave out that mighty question, "How will this affect their souls?"

Love for the souls of your children is the quintessence of all love. **To pet and pamper and indulge your child, as if this world was all he had to look to, and this life the only season for happiness—to do this is not true love, but cruelty.** It is treating him like some beast of the earth, which has but one world to look to, and nothing after death. It is hiding from him that grand truth, which he ought to be made to learn from his very infancy—that the chief end of his life is the salvation of his soul.

A true Christian must be no slave to fashion, if he would train his child for heaven. He must not be content to do things merely because they are the custom of the world; to teach them and instruct them in certain ways, merely because it is usual; to allow them to read books of a questionable sort, merely because everybody else reads them; to let them form habits of a doubtful tendency, merely because they are the habits of the day. He must train with an eye to his children's souls. He must not be ashamed to hear his training called singular and strange. What if it is? The time is short—the fashion of this world passes away. He that has trained his children for heaven, rather than for earth—for God, rather than for man—he is the parent that will be called wise at last.

5. Train your child to a knowledge of the BIBLE.

You cannot make your children love the Bible, I allow. None but the Holy Spirit can give us a heart to delight in the Word. But you can make your children acquainted with the Bible; and be sure they cannot be acquainted with that blessed book too soon, or too well.

A thorough knowledge of the Bible is the foundation of all clear views of religion. He that is well-grounded in it will not generally be found a waverer, and carried about by every wind of new doctrine. Any system of training which does not make a knowledge of Scripture the first thing is unsafe and unsound.
You have need to be careful on this point just now, for the devil is abroad, and error abounds. Some are to be found among us who give the Church the honor due to Jesus Christ. Some are to be found who make the sacraments saviors and passports to eternal life. And some are to be found in like manner who honor a catechism more than the Bible, or fill the minds of their children with miserable little story-books, instead of the Scripture of truth. But if you love your children, let the simple Bible be everything in the training of their souls; and let all other books go down and take the second place.

Care not so much for their being mighty in the catechism, as for their being mighty in the Scriptures. This is the training, believe me, that God will honor. The Psalmist says of Him, "You have magnified Your Word above all Your name" (Ps. 138:2); and I think that He gives an especial blessing to all who try to magnify it among men.

See that your children read the Bible **reverently**. Train them to look on it, not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the Word of God, written by the Holy Spirit Himself—all true, all profitable, and able to make us wise unto salvation, through faith which is in

Christ Jesus.

See that they read it **regularly**. Train them to regard it as their soul's daily food—as a thing essential to their soul's daily health. I know well you can not make this anything more than a form; but there is no telling the amount of sin which a mere form may indirectly restrain.

See that they read it **all**. You need not shrink from bringing any doctrine before them. You need not fancy that the leading doctrines of Christianity are things which children cannot understand. Children understand far more of the Bible than we are apt to suppose.

Tell them of **sin**—its guilt, its consequences, its power, its vileness. You will find they can comprehend something of this.

Tell them of the Lord **Jesus Christ**, and His work for our salvation—the atonement, the cross, the blood, the sacrifice, the intercession. You will discover there is something not beyond them in all this.

Tell them of the work of the **Holy Spirit** in man's heart, how He changes, and renews, and sanctifies, and purifies—you will soon see they can go along with you in some measure in this. In short, I suspect we have no idea how much a little child can take in of the length and breadth of the glorious gospel. They see far more of these things than we suppose.

As to the age when the religious instruction of a child should begin, no general rule can be laid down. The mind seems to open in some children much more quickly than in others. We seldom begin too early. There are wonderful examples on record of what a child can attain to, even at three years old.

Fill their minds with Scripture. Let the Word dwell in them richly. Give them the Bible, the whole Bible, even while they are young.

6. Train them to a habit of PRAYER.

Prayer is the very life-breath of true religion. It is one of the first evidences that a man is born again. "Behold," said the Lord of Saul, in the day he sent Ananias to him, "Behold, he prays" (Acts 9:11). He had begun to pray, and that was proof enough.

Prayer was the distinguishing mark of the Lord's people in the day that there began to be a separation between them and the world. "Then men began to call upon the name of the Lord" (Gen. 4:26).

Prayer is the distinguishing trait of all real Christians now. They pray—for they tell God their needs, their feelings, their desires, their fears; and mean what they say. The nominal Christian may repeat prayers, and good prayers too, but he goes no further.

Prayer is the turning-point in a man's soul. Our ministry is unprofitable, and our labor is vain, until you are brought to your knees. Until then, we have no hope about you.

Prayer is one great secret of spiritual prosperity. When there is much private communion with God, your soul will grow like the grass after rain. When there is little prayer, all will be at a standstill, you will barely keep your soul alive. Show me a growing Christian, a going forward Christian, a strong Christian, a flourishing Christian, and sure am I, he is one that speaks often with his Lord. He asks much, and he has much. He tells Jesus everything, and so he always knows how to act.

Prayer is the **mightiest** resource God has placed in our hands. It is the best weapon to use in every difficulty, and the surest remedy in every trouble. It is the key that unlocks the treasury of promises, and the hand that draws forth grace and help in time of need. It is the silver trumpet God commands us to sound in all our necessity, and it is the cry He has promised always to attend to, even as a loving mother to the voice of her child.

Prayer is the **simplest** means that man can use in coming to God. It is within reach of all—the sick, the aged, the infirm, the paralytic, the blind, the poor, the unlearned—all can pray. It avails you nothing to plead lack of memory, and lack of learning, and lack of books, and lack of scholarship in this matter. So long as you have a tongue to tell your soul's state, you may and ought to pray. Those words, "You have not, because you ask not" (James 4:2), will be a fearful condemnation to many in the day of judgment.

Parents, if you love your children, do all that lies in your power to train them up to a habit of prayer. Show them how to begin. Tell them what to say. Encourage them to persevere. Remind them if they become careless and slack about it. Let it not be your fault, at any rate, if they never call on the name of the Lord.

This, remember, is the first step in religion which a child is able to take. Long before he can read, you can teach him to kneel by his mother's side, and repeat the simple words of prayer and praise which she puts in his mouth. And as the first steps in any undertaking are always the most important, so is the manner in which your children's prayers are prayed, a point which deserves your closest attention. Few seem to know how much depends on this. You must beware lest they get into a way of saying them in a hasty, careless, and irreverent manner. You must beware of giving up the oversight of this matter to servants and nurses, or of trusting too much to your children doing it when left to themselves. I cannot praise that mother who never looks after this most important part of her child's daily life herself. Surely if there be any habit which your own hand and eye should help in forming, it is the habit of prayer. Believe me, if you never hear your children pray yourself, you are much to blame. You are little wiser than the bird described in Job, "which leaves her eggs in the earth, and warms them in the dust, and forgets that the foot may crush them, or that the wild beast may break them. She is hardened against her young ones, as though they were not hers—her labor is in vain without fear" (Job 39:14-16).

Prayer is, of all habits, the one which we recollect the longest. Many a grey-headed man could tell you how his mother used to make

him pray in the days of his childhood. Other things have passed away from his mind perhaps. The church where he was taken to worship, the minister whom he heard preach, the companions who used to play with him—all these, it may be, have passed from his memory, and left no mark behind. But you will often find it is far different with his first prayers. He will often be able to tell you where he knelt, and what he was taught to say, and even how his mother looked all the while. It will come up as fresh before his mind's eye as if it was but yesterday.

Reader, if you love your children, I charge you, do not let the seed-time of a prayerful habit pass away unimproved. If you train your children to anything, train them, at least, to a habit of prayer.

7. Train them to habits of diligence, and regularity about public means of grace.

Tell them of the duty and privilege of going to the house of God, and joining in the prayers of the congregation. Tell them wherever the Lord's people are gathered together, there the Lord Jesus is present in an especial manner, and that those who absent themselves must expect, like the Apostle Thomas, to miss a blessing. Tell them of the importance of hearing the Word preached, and that it is God's ordinance for converting, sanctifying, and building up the souls of men. Tell them how the Apostle Paul enjoins us not "to forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is" (Heb. 10:25); but to exhort one another, to stir one another up to it, and so much the more as we see the day approaching.

I call it a sad sight in a church when nobody comes up to the Lord's table but the elderly people, and the young men and the young women all turn away. But I call it a sadder sight still when no children are to be seen in a church, excepting those who come to the Sunday School, and are obliged to attend. Let none of this guilt lie at your doors. There are many boys and girls in every parish, besides those who come to school, and you who are their parents and friends should see to it that they come with you to church.

Do not allow them to grow up with a habit of making vain excuses for not coming. Give them plainly to understand, that so long as they are under your roof it is the rule of your house for everyone in health to honor the Lord's house upon the Lord's day, and that you reckon the Sabbath-breaker to be a murderer of his own soul.

See to it too, if it can be so arranged, that your children go with you to church, and sit near you when they are there. To go to church is one thing, but to behave well at church is quite another. And believe me, there is no security for good behavior like that of having them under your own eye.

The minds of young people are easily drawn aside, and their attention lost, and every possible means should be used to counteract this. I do not like to see them coming to church by themselves—they often get into bad company by the way, and so learn more evil on the Lord's day than in all the rest of the week. Neither do I like to see what I call "a young people's corner" in a church. They often catch habits of inattention and irreverence there, which it takes years to unlearn, if ever they are unlearned at all. What I like to see is a whole family sitting together, old and young, side by side—men, women, and children, serving God according to their households.

But there are some who say that it is useless to urge children to attend means of grace, because they cannot understand them. I would not have you listen to such reasoning. I find no such doctrine in the Old Testament. When Moses goes before Pharaoh (Ex. 10:9), I observe he says, "We will go with our young and with our old, with our sons and with our daughters—for we must hold a feast unto the Lord." When Joshua read the law, I observe, "There was not a word which Joshua read not before all the congregation of Israel, with the women and the little ones, and the strangers that were conversant among them." "Thrice in the year," says Ex. 34:23, "shall all your men and children appear before the Lord God, the God of Israel." And when I turn to the New Testament, I find children mentioned there as partaking in public acts of religion as well as in the Old. When Paul was leaving the disciples at Tyre for the last time, I find it said (Acts 21:5), "They all brought us on our way, with wives and children, until we were out of the city—and we kneeled down on the shore, and prayed."

Samuel, in the days of his childhood, appears to have ministered unto the Lord some time before he really knew Him. "Samuel did not yet know the Lord, neither was the word of the Lord yet revealed unto him" (1 Sam. 3:7). The Apostles themselves do not seem to have understood all that our Lord said at the time that it was spoken—"These things understood not His disciples at the first—but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written of Him" (John 12:16).

Parents, comfort your minds with these examples. Do not be cast down because your children see not the full value of the means of grace now. Only train them up to a habit of regular attendance. Set it before their minds as a high, holy, and solemn duty, and believe me, the day will very likely come when they will bless you for your deed.

8. Train them to a habit of FAITH.

I mean by this, you should train them up to believe what you say. You should try to make them feel confidence in your judgment, and respect your opinions, as better than their own. You should accustom them to think that, when you say a thing is bad for them, it must be bad, and when you say it is good for them, it must be good; that your knowledge, in short, is better than their own, and that they may rely implicitly on your word. Teach them to feel that what they know not now, they will probably know hereafter, and to be satisfied there is a reason and a needs-be for everything you require them to do.

Who indeed can describe the blessedness of a real spirit of faith? Or rather, who can tell the misery that unbelief has brought upon the world? Unbelief made Eve eat the forbidden fruit—she doubted the truth of God's word—"You shall surely die." Unbelief made the old world reject Noah's warning, and so perish in sin. Unbelief kept Israel in the wilderness—it was the bar that kept them from entering the promised land. Unbelief made the Jews crucify the Lord of glory—they believed not the voice of Moses and the prophets, though read to them every day. And unbelief is the reigning sin of man's heart down to this very hour—unbelief in God's promises—unbelief

in God's threatenings—unbelief in our own sinfulness—unbelief in our own danger—unbelief in everything that runs counter to the pride and worldliness of our evil hearts. Reader, you train your children to little purpose if you do not train them to a habit of implicit faith—faith in their parents' word, confidence that what their parents say must be right.

I have heard it said by some, that you should require nothing of children which they cannot understand—that you should explain and give a reason for everything you desire them to do. I warn you solemnly against such a notion. I tell you plainly, I think it an unsound and rotten principle. No doubt it is absurd to make a mystery of everything you do, and there are many things which it is well to explain to children, in order that they may see that they are reasonable and wise. But to bring them up with the idea that they must take nothing on trust, that they, with their weak and imperfect understandings, must have the "why" and the "wherefore" made clear to them at every step they take—this is indeed a fearful mistake, and likely to have the worst effect on their minds.

Reason with your child if you are so disposed, at certain times, but never forget to keep him in mind (if you really love him) that he is but a child after all—that he thinks as a child, he understands as a child, and therefore must not expect to know the reason of everything at once.

Set before him the example of Isaac, in the day when Abraham took him to offer him on Mount Moriah (Gen. 22.). He asked his father that single question, "Where is the lamb for a burned-offering?" and he got no answer but this, "God will provide Himself a lamb." How, or where, or where, or in what manner, or by what means—all this Isaac was not told; but the answer was enough. He believed that it would be well, because his father said so, and he was content.

Tell your children, too, that we must all be learners in our beginnings, that there is an alphabet to be mastered in every kind of knowledge—that the best horse in the world had need once to be broken—that a day will come when they will see the wisdom of all your training. But in the meantime if you say a thing is right, it must be enough for them—they must believe you, and be content.

Parents, if any point in training is important, it is this. I charge you by the affection you have to your children, use every means to train them up to a habit of faith.

9. Train them to a habit of OBEDIENCE.

This is an object which it is worth any labor to attain. No habit, I suspect, has such an influence over our lives as this. **Parents, determine to make your children obey you—though it may cost you much trouble—and cost them many tears!** Let there be no questioning, and reasoning, and disputing, and delaying, and answering back. When you give them a command, let them see plainly that you will have it done.

Obedience is the only reality. It is faith visible, faith acting, and faith incarnate. It is the test of real discipleship among the Lord's people. "You are My friends if you do whatever I command you" (John 15:14). **It ought to be the mark of well-trained children, that they cheerfully do whatever their parents command them.** Where, indeed, is the honor which the fifth commandment enjoins, if fathers and mothers are not obeyed **cheerfully**, **willingly**, and **at once**?

Early obedience has all Scripture on its side. It is in Abraham's praise, not merely he will train his family, but "he will command his children, and his household after him" (Gen. 18:19). It is said of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, that when "He was young He was subject to Mary and Joseph" (Luke 2:51). Observe how implicitly Joseph obeyed the order of his father Jacob (Gen. 37:13). See how Isaiah speaks of it as an evil thing, when "the child shall behave himself proudly against the ancient" (Isa. 3:5). Mark how the Apostle Paul names disobedience to parents as one of the bad signs of the latter days (2 Tim. 3:2). Mark how he singles out this grace of requiring obedience as one that should adorn a Christian minister—"a bishop must be one that rules well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity." And again, "Let the deacons rule their children and their own houses well " (1 Tim. 3:4, 12). And again, an elder must be one "having faithful children, children not accused of riot, or unruly" (Titus 1:6).

Parents, do you wish to see your children happy? Take care, then, that you train them to obey when they are spoken to—to do as they are told. Believe me, we are not made for entire independence—we are not fit for it. Even Christ's freemen have a yoke to wear, they "serve the Lord Christ" (Col. 3:24). Children cannot learn too soon that this is a world in which we are not all intended to rule, and that we are never in our right place until we know how to obey our betters. Teach them to obey while young, or else they will be fretting against God all their lives long, and wear themselves out with the vain idea of being independent of His control.

Reader, this hint is only too much needed. You will see many in this day who allow their children to choose and think for themselves long before they are able, and even make excuses for their disobedience, as if it were a thing not to be blamed. To my eyes, a parent always yielding, and a child always having its own way, are a most painful sight—painful, because I see God's appointed order of things inverted and turned upside down—painful, because I feel sure the consequence to that child's character in the end will be self-will, pride, and self-conceit. You must not wonder that men refuse to obey their Father which is in heaven, if you allow them, when children, to disobey their father who is upon earth.

Parents, if you love your children—let obedience be a motto and a watchword continually before their eyes.

10. Train them to a habit of always speaking the TRUTH.

Truth-speaking is far less common in the world than at first sight we are disposed to think. The whole truth, and nothing but the truth, is a golden rule which many would do well to bear in mind. Lying and prevarication are old sins. The devil was the father of them—he deceived Eve by a bold lie, and ever since the fall it is a sin against which all the children of Eve have need to be on their

guard.

Only think how much falsehood and deceit there is in the world! How much exaggeration! How many additions are made to a simple story! How many things left out, if it does not serve the speaker's interest to tell them! How few there are about us of whom we can say, we put unhesitating trust in their word! Verily the ancient Persians were wise in their generation—it was a leading point with them in educating their children, that they should learn to speak the truth. What an awful proof it is of man's natural sinfulness, that it should be needful to name such a point at all!

Reader, I would have you notice how often God is spoken of in the Old Testament as the God of truth. Truth seems to be especially set before us as a leading feature in the character of Him with whom we have to do. He never swerves from the straight line. He abhors lying and hypocrisy. Try to keep this continually before your children's minds. Press upon them at all times, that less than the truth is a lie; that evasion, excuse-making, and exaggeration are all halfway houses towards what is false, and ought to be avoided. Encourage them in any circumstances to be straightforward, and, whatever it may cost them, to speak the truth.

I press this subject on your attention, not merely for the sake of your children's character in the world—though I might dwell much on this—I urge it rather for your own comfort and assistance in all your dealings with them. You will find it a mighty help indeed, to be able always to trust their word. It will go far to prevent that habit of concealment, which so unhappily prevails sometimes among children. Openness and straightforwardness depend much upon a parent's treatment of this matter in the days of our infancy.

11. Train them to a habit of always redeeming the TIME.

Idleness is the devil's best friend! It is the surest way to give him an opportunity of doing us harm. An idle mind is like an open door, and if Satan does not enter in himself by it, it is certain he will throw in something to raise bad thoughts in our souls.

No created being was ever meant to be idle. Service and work are the appointed portions of every creature of God. The angels in heaven work—they are the Lord's ministering servants, ever doing His will. Adam, in Paradise, had work—he was appointed to dress the garden of Eden, and to keep it. The redeemed saints in glory will have work, "They rest not day and night singing praise and glory to Him who bought them." And man, weak, sinful man, must have something to do, or else his soul will soon get into an unhealthy state. We must have our hands filled, and our minds occupied with something, or else our imaginations will soon ferment and breed mischief.

And what is true of us, is true of our children too. Alas, indeed, for the man that has nothing to do! The Jews thought idleness a positive sin—it was a law of theirs that every man should bring up his son to some useful trade—and they were right. They knew the heart of man better than some of us appear to do.

Idleness made Sodom what she was. "This was the iniquity of your sister Sodom, pride, fullness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her" (Ezek. 16:49). Idleness had much to do with David's awful sin with the wife of Uriah—I see in 2 Sam. 11 that Joab went out to war against Ammon, "but David tarried still at Jerusalem." Was not that idle? And then it was that he saw Bathsheba—and the next step we read of is his tremendous and miserable fall.

Truly, I believe that **idleness has led to more sin than almost any other habit that could be named!** I suspect it is the mother of many a work of the flesh—the mother of adultery, fornication, drunkenness—and many other deeds of darkness that I have not time to name. Let your own conscience say whether I do not speak the truth. You were idle, and at once the devil knocked at the door and came in.

And indeed I do not wonder—everything in the world around us seems to teach the same lesson. It is the still water which becomes stagnant and impure—the running, moving streams are always clear. If you have steam machinery, you must work it, or it soon gets out of order. If you have a horse, you must exercise him; he is never so well as when he has regular work. If you would have good bodily health yourself, you must take exercise. If you always sit still, your body is sure at length to complain. And just so is it with the soul. The active moving mind is a hard mark for the devil to shoot at. Try to be always full of useful employment, and thus your enemy will find it difficult to get room to sow tares.

Reader, I ask you to set these things before the minds of your children. **Teach them the value of time, and try to make them learn the habit of using it well.** It pains me to see children idling over what they have in hand, whatever it may be. I love to see them active and industrious, and giving their whole heart to all they do; giving their whole heart to lessons, when they have to learn—giving their whole heart even to their amusements, when they go to play.

But if you love them well—**let idleness be counted a sin in your family!**

12. Train them with a constant fear of over-indulgence.

This is the one point of all on which you have most need to be on your guard. It is natural to be tender and affectionate towards your own flesh and blood, and it is the excess of this very tenderness and affection which you have to fear. Take heed that it does not make you blind to your children's faults—and deaf to all advice about them. Take heed lest it make you overlook bad conduct—rather than have the pain of inflicting punishment and correction. I know well that punishment and correction are disagreeable things. **Nothing is more unpleasant than giving pain to those we love, and bringing forth their tears. But so long as hearts are what hearts are, it is vain to suppose, as a general rule, that children can ever be brought up without correction.**

Spoiling is a very expressive word—and sadly full of meaning. Now it is the shortest way to spoil children—to let them have their own

way—to allow them to do wrong and not to punish them for it. Believe me, you must not do it, whatever pain it may cost you unless you wish to ruin your children's souls.

You cannot say that Scripture does not speak expressly on this subject—"He that spares his rod, hates his son; but he that loves him, chastens him often" (Proverbs 13:24). "Chasten your son while there is hope, and let not your soul spare for his crying" (Proverbs 19:18). "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child—but the rod of correction shall drive it from him" (Proverbs 22:15). "Withhold not correction from the child, for if you beat him with the rod he shall not die. You shall beat him with the rod, and deliver his soul from hell" (Proverbs 23:13, 14). "The rod and reproof give wisdom—but a child left to himself brings his mother to shame." "Correct your son, and he shall give you rest—yes, he shall give delight to your soul" (Proverbs 29:15, 17).

How strong and forcible are these texts! How melancholy is the fact, that in many Christian families they seem almost unknown! Their children need reproof, but it is hardly ever given—they need correction, but it is hardly ever employed. And yet this book of Proverbs is not obsolete and unfit for Christians. It is given by inspiration of God, and profitable. It is given for our learning, even as the Epistles to the Romans and Ephesians. Surely the believer who brings up his children without attention to its counsel is making himself wise above that which is written, and greatly errs.

Fathers and mothers, I tell you plainly, if you don't punish your children when they are in fault, you are doing them a grievous wrong. I warn you, this is the rock on which the people of God, in every age, have only too frequently made shipwreck. I would sincerely persuade you to be wise in time, and keep clear of it. See it in **Eli's** case. His sons Hophni and Phineas "made themselves vile, and he restrained them not." He gave them no more than a tame and lukewarm reproof, when he ought to have rebuked them sharply. In one word, he honored his sons above God. And what was the end of these things? He lived to hear of the death of both his sons in battle, and his own grey hairs were brought down with sorrow to the grave (1 Sam. 2:22- 29, 3:13).

See, too, the case of **David**. Who can read without pain the history of his children, and their sins? Amnon's incest—Absalom's murder and proud rebellion—Adonijah's scheming ambition—truly these were grievous wounds for the man after God's own heart to receive from his own house. But was there no fault on his side? I fear there can be no doubt there was. I find a clue to it all in the account of Adonijah in 1 Kings—"His father had not displeased him at any time in saying, Why have you done so?" There was the foundation of all the mischief. David was an over-indulgent father—a father who let his children have their own way—and he reaped according as he had sown!

Parents, I beseech you, for your children's sake, beware of over-indulgence. I call on you to remember, it is your first duty to consult their real interests, and not their fancies and likings—to train them, not to amuse them—to profit them, not merely to please them.

You must not give way to every wish and caprice of your child's mind, however much you may love him. You must not let him suppose his will is to be everything, and that he has only to desire a thing and it will be done. Do not, I beg you, make your children idols—lest God should take them away, and break your idol, just to convince you of your folly!

Learn to say "No" to your children. Show them that you are able to refuse whatever you think is not fit for them. Show them that you are ready to punish disobedience, and that when you speak of punishment, you are not only ready to threaten, but also to perform. Do not merely threaten. Threatened folks, and threatened faults, live long. Punish seldom—but really and earnestly. Frequent and slight punishment is a wretched system indeed.

Some parents have a way of saying, "Naughty child," to a boy or girl on every slight occasion, and often without good cause. It is a very foolish habit. Words of blame should never be used without real reason.

As to the best way of punishing a child, no general rule can be laid down. The characters of children are so exceedingly different, that what would be a severe punishment to one child, would be no punishment at all to another. I only beg to enter my decided protest against the modern notion that no child ought ever to be spanked. Doubtless some parents use bodily correction far too much, and far too violently—but many others, I fear, use it far too little.

Beware of letting small faults pass unnoticed under the idea "it is a little one." There are no little things in training children—all are important. Little weeds need plucking up as much as any. Leave them alone, and they will soon become giants!

Parents, if there be any point which deserves your attention, believe me, it is this one. It is one that will give you trouble, I know. But if you do not take trouble with your children when they are young—they will give you trouble when they are old! Choose which you prefer.

13. Train them remembering continually how God trains His children.

The Bible tells us that God has an elect people—a family in this world. All poor sinners who have been convinced of sin, and fled to Jesus for peace, make up that family. All of us who really believe on Christ for salvation are its members.

Now God the Father is ever training the members of this family for their everlasting abode with Him in heaven. He acts as a husbandman pruning his vines, that they may bear more fruit. He knows the character of each of us—our besetting sins—our weaknesses—our peculiar infirmities—our special needs. He knows our works and where we dwell, who are our companions in life, and what are our trials, what our temptations, and what are our privileges. He knows all these things, and is ever ordering all for our good. He allots to each of us, in His providence, the very things we need, in order to bear the most fruit—as much of sunshine as we can stand, and as much of rain—as much of bitter things as we can bear, and as much of sweet. Reader, if you would train your children wisely, mark well how God the Father trains His. He does all things well; the plan which He adopts must be right.

See, then, how many things there are which God **withholds** from His children. Few could be found, I suspect, among them who have not had desires which He has never been pleased to fulfill. There has often been some one thing they wanted to attain, and yet there has always been some barrier to prevent attainment. It has been just as if God was placing it above our reach, and saying, "This is not good for you; this must not be." Moses desired exceedingly to cross over Jordan, and see the goodly land of promise; but you will remember his desire was never granted.

See, too, how often God **leads** His people by ways which seem dark and mysterious to our eyes. We cannot see the meaning of all His dealings with us; we cannot see the reasonableness of the path in which our feet are treading. Sometimes so many trials have assailed us—so many difficulties encompassed us—that we have not been able to discover the needs-be of it all. It has been just as if our Father was taking us by the hand into a dark place and saying, "Ask no questions, but follow Me." There was a direct road from Egypt to Canaan, yet Israel was not led into it; but round, through the wilderness. And this seemed hard at the time. "The soul of the people," we are told, "was much discouraged because of the way" (Exod. 13:17; Num. 21:4).

See, also, how often God **chastens** His people with trial and affliction. He sends them crosses and disappointments. He lays them low with sickness. He strips them of property and friends. He changes them from one position to another. He visits them with things most hard to flesh and blood—and some of us have well-near fainted under the burdens laid upon us. We have felt pressed beyond strength, and have been almost ready to murmur at the hand which chastened us. Paul the Apostle had a thorn in the flesh appointed him, some bitter bodily trial, no doubt, though we know not exactly what it was. But this we know—he besought the Lord thrice that it might be removed; yet it was not taken away (2 Cor. 12:8, 9).

Now, reader, notwithstanding all these things, did you ever hear of a single child of God who thought his Father did not treat him wisely? No, I am sure you never did. God's children would always tell you, in the long run, it was a blessed thing they did not have their own way, and that God had done far better for them than they could have done for themselves. Yes! And they could tell you, too, that God's dealings had provided more happiness for them than they ever would have obtained themselves, and that His way, however dark at times, was the way of pleasantness and the path of peace.

I ask you to lay to heart the lesson which God's dealings with His people is meant to teach you. Fear not to withhold from your child anything you think will do him harm, whatever his own wishes may be. This is God's plan.

Hesitate not to lay on him commands, of which he may not at present see the wisdom, and to guide him in ways which may not now seem reasonable to his mind. This is God's plan.

Shrink not from **chastising** and **correcting** him whenever you see his soul's health requires it—however painful it may be to your feelings; and remember **medicines** for the mind must not be rejected because they are bitter. This is God's plan.

And do not be afraid, above all, that such a plan of training will make your child unhappy. I warn you against this delusion. Depend on it, there is no surer road to unhappiness than always having our own way. To have our wills checked and denied is a blessed thing for us; it makes us value enjoyments when they come. To be indulged perpetually is the way to be made selfish; and selfish people and spoiled children, believe me, are seldom happy.

Reader, do not be wiser than God—train your children as He trains His.

14. Train them remembering continually the influence of your own EXAMPLE.

Instruction, and advice, and commands will profit little, unless they are backed up by the pattern of your own life. Your children will never believe you are in earnest, and really wish them to obey you, so long as your actions contradict your counsel. Tillotson made a wise remark when he said, "**To give children good instruction, and a bad example, is but beckoning to them with the head to show them the way to heaven; while we take them by the hand and lead them in the way to hell!**"

We little know the force and power of example. No one of us can live to himself in this world; we are always influencing our children, in one way or another, either for good or for evil, either for God or for sin. They see our ways, they mark our conduct, they observe our behavior, and what they see us practice, that they may fairly suppose we think right. And never, I believe, does example show so powerfully as it does in the case of parents and children.

Fathers and mothers, do not forget that children learn more by the **eye** than they do by the **ear**. No school will make such deep marks on character as home. The best of school-teachers will not imprint on their minds as much as they will pick up at your fireside. **Imitation** is a far stronger principle with children than **memory**. What they **see** has a much stronger effect on their minds than what they are **told**.

Take care, then, what you do in front of your child. It is a true proverb, "Who sins before a child, sins double." Strive rather to be a living epistle of Christ, such as your families can read, and that plainly too. Be an example of reverence for the Word of God, reverence in prayer, reverence for means of grace, reverence for the Lord's day. Be an example in words, in temper, in diligence, in temperance, in faith, in charity, in kindness, in humility. Do not think your children will practice what they do not see you do. **You are their model picture—and they will copy what you are.** Your reasoning and your lecturing, your wise commands and your good advice—all this they may not understand, but **they can understand your life!**

Children are very quick observers—very quick in seeing through some kinds of hypocrisy—very quick in finding out what you really think and feel—very quick in adopting all your ways and opinions. You will often find as the father is—so is the son.

Remember the word that the conqueror Caesar always used to his soldiers in a battle. He did not say "Go forward," but "Come!" So it must be with you in training your children. **They will seldom learn habits which they see you despise, or walk in paths in which you do not walk yourself.** He that **preaches** to his children what he does not **practice**, is working a work that never goes forward. It is like the fabled web of Penelope of old, who wove all day, and unwove all night. Even so, **the parent who tries to train without setting a good example is building with one hand—and pulling down with the other!**

15. Train them, remembering continually the power of SIN.

I name this shortly, in order to guard you against unscriptural expectations.

You must not expect to find your children's minds a sheet of pure white paper, and to have no trouble if you only use right means. I warn you plainly you will find no such thing. **It is painful to see how much corruption and evil there is in a young child's heart, and how soon it begins to bear fruit. Violent tempers, self-will, pride, envy, sullenness, passion, idleness, selfishness, deceit, cunning, falsehood, hypocrisy, a terrible aptness to learn what is bad, a painful slowness to learn what is good, a readiness to pretend anything in order to gain their own ends—all these things, or some of them, you must be prepared to see, even in your own flesh and blood. In little ways they will creep out at a very early age; it is almost startling to observe how naturally they seem to spring up. Children require no schooling to learn to sin.**

But you must not be discouraged and cast down by what you see. **You must not think it a strange and unusual thing—that their little hearts are so full of sin.** It is the only portion which our father Adam left us; it is that fallen nature with which we come into the world; it is that inheritance which belongs to us all. Let it rather make you more diligent in using every means which seem most likely, by God's blessing, to counteract the mischief. Let it make you more and more careful, so far as in you lies, to keep your children out of the way of temptation.

Never listen to those who tell you your children are good. Think rather that their hearts are always inflammable as tinder. At their very best, they only need a spark to set their corruptions on fire. Parents are seldom too cautious. Remember the natural depravity of your children, and take care.

16. Train them remembering continually the PROMISES of Scripture.

I name this also shortly, in order to guard you against discouragement.

You have a plain promise on your side, "Train up your child in the way he should go—and when he is old he shall not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6). Think what it is to have a promise like this. Promises were the only lamp of hope which cheered the hearts of the patriarchs before the Bible was written. Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph—all lived on a few promises, and prospered in their souls. Promises are the cordials which in every age have supported and strengthened the believer. He that has got a plain text upon his side need never be cast down. Fathers and mothers, when your hearts are failing, and ready to halt, look at the word of this text, and take comfort.

Think **who it is that promises**. It is not the word of a man, who may lie or change his mind; it is the word of the King of kings, who never changes. Has He said a thing, and shall He not do it? Or has He spoken, and shall He not make it good? Neither is anything too hard for Him to perform. The things that are impossible with men are possible with God. Reader, if we get not the benefit of the promise we are dwelling upon, the fault is not in Him, but in ourselves.

Think, too, **what the promise contains**, before you refuse to take comfort from it. It speaks of a certain time when good training shall especially bear fruit—"when a child is old." Surely there is comfort in this. You may not see with your own eyes the result of careful training, but you know not what blessed fruits may not spring from it, long after you are dead and gone. It is not God's way to give everything at once. "Afterward" is the time when He often chooses to work, both in the things of nature and in the things of grace. "Afterward" is the season when affliction bears the peaceable fruit of righteousness (Heb. 12:11). "Afterward" was the time when the son who refused to work in his father's vineyard repented and went (Matt. 21:29). And "afterward" is the time to which parents must look forward if they see not success at once—you must sow in hope and plant in hope.

"Cast your bread upon the waters," says the Spirit, "for you shall find it after many days" (Eccles. 11:1). Many children, I doubt not, shall rise up in the day of judgment, and bless their parents for good training, who never gave any signs of having profited by it during their parents' lives. Go forward then in faith, and be sure that your labor shall not be altogether thrown away. Three times did Elijah stretch himself upon the widow's child before it revived. Take example from him, and persevere.

17. Train them, lastly, with continual prayer for a blessing on all you do.

Without the blessing of the Lord, your best endeavors will do no good. **He has the hearts of all men in His hands, and except He touch the hearts of your children by His Spirit, you will weary yourself to no purpose.** Water, therefore, the seed you sow on their minds, with unceasing prayer. The Lord is far more willing to hear than we to pray; far more ready to give blessings than we to ask them—but He loves to be entreated for them. And I set this matter of prayer before you, as the top-stone and seal of all you do. I suspect the child of many prayers is seldom cast away.

Look upon your children as Jacob did on his; he tells Esau they are "the children which God has graciously given your servant" (Gen. 33:5). Look on them as Joseph did on his; he told his father, "They are the sons whom God has given me" (Gen. 48:9). Count them

with the Psalmist to be "an heritage and reward from the Lord" (Ps. 127:3). And then ask the Lord, with a holy boldness, to be gracious and merciful to His own gifts. Mark how Abraham intercedes for Ishmael, because he loved him, "Oh that Ishmael might live before you" (Gen. 17:18). See how Manoah speaks to the angel about Samson, "How shall we order the child, and how shall we do unto him?" (Judg. 13:12). Observe how tenderly Job cared for his children's souls, "He offered burned-offerings according to the number of them all, for he said, It may be my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually" (Job 1:5). Parents, if you love your children, go and do likewise. You cannot name their names before the mercy-seat too often.

And now, reader, in conclusion, let me once more press upon you the necessity and importance of using every single means in your power, if you would train children for heaven.

I know well that God is a sovereign God, and does all things according to the counsel of His own will. I know that Rehoboam was the son of Solomon, and Manasseh the son of Hezekiah, and that you do not always see godly parents having a godly seed. But I know also that God is a God who works by means, and sure am I, if you make light of such means as I have mentioned, your children are not likely to turn out well.

Fathers and mothers, you may take your children to church—you may send them to the best of schools, and give them Bibles and prayer books, and fill them with head knowledge—but if all this time there is no regular training at home, I tell you plainly, I fear it will go hard in the end with your children's souls. **Home is the place where habits are formed—home is the place where the foundations of character are laid—home gives the bias to our tastes, and likings, and opinions.** See then, I beg you, that there be careful training at home. Happy indeed is the man who can say, as Bolton did upon his dying bed, to his children, "I do believe not one of you will dare to meet me before the tribunal of Christ in an unregenerate state."

Fathers and mothers, I charge you solemnly before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, take every effort to train your children in the way they should go. I charge you not merely for the sake of your children's souls; I charge you for the sake of your own future comfort and peace. Truly it is your interest so to do. Truly your own happiness in great measure depends on it. Children have ever been the bow from which the sharpest arrows have pierced man's heart! Children have mixed the bitterest cups that man has ever had to drink! Children have caused the saddest tears that man has ever had to shed! Adam could tell you so; Jacob could tell you so; David could tell you so. There are no sorrows on earth like those which children have brought upon their parents! Oh! take heed, lest your own neglect should lay up misery for you in your old age. Take heed, lest you weep under the ill-treatment of a thankless child, in the days when your eye is dim, and your natural force abated.

If ever you wish your children to be the restorers of your life, and the nourishers of your old age—if you would have them blessings and not curses—joys and not sorrows—Judahs and not Reubens—Ruths and not Orpahs—if you would not, like Noah, be ashamed of their deeds, and, like Rebekah, be made weary of your life by them—if this be your wish, remember my advice betimes, train them while young in the right way.

And as for me, I will conclude by putting up my prayer to God for all who read this paper, that you may all be taught of God to feel the value of your own souls. This is one reason why baptism is too often a mere form, and Christian training despised and disregarded. Too often parents feel not for themselves, and so they feel not for their children. They do not realize the tremendous difference between a state of nature and a state of grace, and therefore they are content to let them alone.

Now may the Lord teach you all that **sin** is that abominable thing which God hates. Then, I know you will mourn over the sins of your children, and strive to pluck them out as brands from the fire.

May the Lord teach you all how precious **Christ** is, and what a mighty and complete work He has done for our salvation. Then, I feel confident you will use every means to bring your children to Jesus, that they may live through Him.

May the Lord teach you all your need of the **Holy Spirit**, to renew, sanctify, and quicken your souls. Then, I feel sure you will urge your children to pray for Him without ceasing, and never rest until He has come down into their hearts with power, and made them new creatures.

If the Lord grants this, and then I have a good hope that you will indeed train up your children well—train well for this life, and train well for the life to come—train well for earth, and train well for heaven—train them for God, for Christ, and for eternity!

Looking Unto Jesus!

by J. C. Ryle

"Looking unto Jesus." Hebrews 12:2

The text of Scripture which heads this page is well fitted to supply useful thoughts for Christmas. At a season like this, when we are specially invited to remember how our blessed Lord came into the world, and was born of the Virgin Mary, we surely cannot do better than ask ourselves, what we know of *"Looking unto Jesus."*

The Christianity which the world requires, is a Christianity for everyday life. No other religion will ever receive much heart-felt

attention from mankind. It may exist; but it will never strike deep root, and satisfy souls. A mere *Sunday religion* is not enough. A thing put on and off with our Sunday clothes is powerless. Thinking men feel and know that there are seven days in a week, and that life is not made up of Sundays. A weekly round of forms and ceremonies within consecrated buildings, is not enough. Wise men remember that there is a world of duty and trial, outside the walls of the church, in which they have to play their part. They want something that they can carry with them into that world. A *monastic* religion will never do. A faith which cannot flourish except in an *ecclesiastical hot-house*, a faith which cannot face the cold air of worldly business, and bear fruit except behind the fence of *retirement* and private *asceticism* — such a faith is a plant which our Heavenly Father has not planted, and it brings no fruit to perfection.

A religion of spasmodic and hysterical excitement will not do. It may suit weak and sentimental minds for a little season; but it rarely lasts, and does not meet the needs of many. It lacks bone and muscle, and too often ends in deadness. It is not the wind, nor the fire, nor the earthquake—but the still small voice, which shows the real presence of the Holy Spirit. (1 Kings 19:12).

The Christianity which the world requires, and the Word of God reveals—is of a very different stamp. It is a useful everyday religion. It is a healthy, strong, manly plant, which can live in every position, and flourish in every atmosphere, except that of sin. It is a religion which a man can carry with him wherever he goes, and never need leave behind him. In the army or in the navy, at the public school or at college, in the hospital-room or at the bar, on the farm or in the shop—true heaven-born Christianity will live and not die. It will wear, and stand, and prosper in any climate—in winter and in summer, in heat and in cold. Such a religion meets the needs of mankind.

But where is such true Christianity to be found? What are its special ingredients? What is the nature of it? What are its peculiar characteristics? The answer to these questions is to be found in the three words of the text which form the title of this paper.

The secret of a vigorous, powerful, everyday Christianity—is to be ever "Looking unto Jesus!" The glorious company of the Apostles, the noble army of martyrs, the saints who in every age and land have made their mark on mankind, and turned the world upside down—all, all have had one common mint-stamp upon them. They have been men who lived "Looking unto Jesus!" The expression of the text is one of those pithy golden sayings which stand out here and there on the face of the New Testament, and demand special attention. It is like "to me to live is Christ," "Christ is all and in all," "Christ, who is our life," "He is our peace," "I live by the faith of the Son of God." (Philip. 1:21 ; Colos. 3:4, 11; Ephes. 2:14; Gal. 2:20.) To each and all of these sayings, one common remark applies. They are rich in thought and food for reflection. They contain far more than a careless eye can see on the surface.

In the phrase *"looking unto Jesus,"* it is useful and interesting to remember that the Greek word which, in our English Bible, we render "looking," is only found here in the New Testament. Literally translated it means "looking off," looking away from other objects to one, only one, and looking on that one with a steady, fixed, intent gaze. And the object we are to look at, you will observe, is a PERSON—not a doctrine, not an abstract theological dogma—but a living Person; and that Person is Jesus the Son of God. How much matter for thought lies there!

Creeds and confessions are the necessary invention of a comparatively modern age. The first and simplest type of an apostolic early Christian was a man who trusted, and loved, a living Divine Person. Of head knowledge, and accurate theological definitions, perhaps he had but little store. Very likely he would have failed a basic exam in one of our theological schools. But one thing he did know: he knew, believed, loved, and would have died for, a living Savior, a real personal Friend in heaven, even Jesus, the crucified and risen Son of God. Well would it be for the Churches of the nineteenth century, if we had more of this simple Christianity among us, and could realize more the Person of Christ.

But, after all, the grand question which rises out of the text is this: *What is it that we are to look at in Jesus? If we are to live habitually fixing the eyes of our mind on Christ, what are the special points to which we are to have regard? If "looking unto Jesus" is the real secret of a healthy, vigorous Christianity, what does the phrase mean?*

I answer these questions without hesitation. I dismiss as insufficient and unsatisfactory, the idea that the Lord Jesus is only set before us here as an "example, and nothing more." I hold with that great divine, John Owen, who was once Dean of my own college at Oxford, that "Christ is proposed to us as one in whom we are to place our faith, trust, and confidence, with all our expectation of success in our Christian course." I consider there are four points of view in which we are intended to "look to Jesus," and I shall try, briefly, to put these four before you in order.

I. First, and foremost (yes! by far first), if we would look rightly to Jesus, **we must look daily at His death—as the only source of inward peace.** We need inward peace. So long as our conscience is asleep, deadened by indulged sin, or dulled and stupefied by incessant pursuit of the things of this world—so long can that man get on tolerably well without peace with God. But once let conscience open its eyes, and shake itself, and rise, and move—and it will make the stoutest child of Adam feel ill at ease. The irrepressible thought that this life is not all—that there is a God, and a judgment, and a something after death, an undiscovered destiny from which no traveler returns—that thought will come up at times in every man's mind, and make him long for inward peace.

It is easy to write brave words about "eternal hope," and strew the path to the grave with flowers. Such theology is naturally popular: the world loves to have it so. But after all, there is something deep down in the heart of hearts of most men, which must be satisfied. The strongest evidence of God's eternal truth, is the universal conscience of mankind. Who is there among us all, who can sit down and think over the days that are past—school days, and college days, and days of middle life, their countless things left undone that ought to have been done, and done that ought not to have been done—who, I say, can think over it all without shame, if indeed he does not turn from the review with disgust and terror, and refuse to think at all?

We all need peace. Where is the man in all England, the best and saintliest among us, whether old or young, who must not confess, if he speaks the truth, that his *best* things now are full of imperfection; and his life a constant succession of shortcomings? Yes! the older we grow, and the nearer we draw to death, the more we see our own great darkness and multitudinous defilements, and the more disposed we feel to cry, *"Unclean! unclean! God be merciful to me a sinner!"*

We need peace. Now, there is only one source of peace revealed in Scripture, and that is the sacrifice of the death of Christ, and the atonement which He has made for sin by that vicarious death on the cross. To **obtain** a portion in that great peace, we have only to

"look" by faith to Jesus, as our Substitute and Redeemer, bearing our sin in His own body on the tree, and to cast all the weight of our souls on Him.

To **enjoy** that peace habitually, we must keep "daily looking back" to the same wondrous point at which we began, daily bringing all our iniquity to Him, and daily remembering that "the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." (Isaiah 53:6). This, I am bold to say, is the Bible way of peace. This is the old fountain of which all the true sheep of Christ have drunk for 1800 years, and have never found its waters to fail. Holy men of all ages, have agreed on one point, at least, in their respective creeds. And that point is this, that the only recipe for peace of conscience, is to "look" by faith to Jesus suffering in our stead, the just for the unjust, paying our debt by that suffering, and dying for us on the cross.

The *carnal wisdom* of these latter days entirely fails to find a better way of peace, than the old path of "looking" to the vicarious death of Christ. Thousands are annually growing grey, and blistering their hands in hewing out cisterns—broken cisterns, which can hold no water. They are vainly hoping that they will find some better way to heaven, than the old-fashioned way of the cross. They will never find it! They will have to turn at last, if they love life, like many before them, to the *brazen serpent*. They must be content, like Israel in the wilderness, *to look and live*, and to be saved by the blood of the Lamb!

The words which Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury, wrote in 1093 upon this subject, are well worth noticing. They are to be found in his directions for the visitation of the sick. Quaint and old-fashioned as they sound, they are wiser, I fear, than many things written in our own times. He says: "Place your trust in no other thing. Commit yourself wholly to the death of Christ. Wrap yourself wholly in this death. And if God would judge you, say, 'Lord, I place the death of our Lord Jesus Christ between me and Your judgment.' And if He shall say unto you that you are a sinner, say, 'I place the death of our Lord Jesus Christ between me and my sins.' If He shall say unto you that you have deserved damnation, say, 'Lord, I put the death of our Lord Jesus Christ between You and all my sins—and I offer His merits for my own.' If He says that He is angry with you, say, 'Lord, I place the death of our Lord Jesus Christ between me and Your anger.' "

Forever let us keep to this old path of peace, and never be ashamed of it. While others go back, and barely conceal their contempt for the so-called *blood theology*, let us boldly go forward, "looking unto Jesus," and saying daily to Him, "Lord, I have *sinned*—but You have *suffered* in my stead! I take You at Your word, and rest my soul on You."

So much for the first "Look to Jesus." We must look back habitually to Christ's death for peace and pardon. This is what Paul meant the Hebrews to do. Let this be the first item in our creed.

II. In the second place, if we would look rightly to Jesus—we must look daily to His life of intercession in heaven, as our principal provision of strength and help. We must surely feel that we need Almighty help every day we live, if we are true Christians. Even when started in the narrow way of life, with pardon, grace, and a new heart—we soon find that, left to ourselves, we would never get safely to our heavenly home. Every returning morning brings with it so much to be done and borne and suffered, that we are often tempted to despair. So weak and treacherous are our *hearts*, so busy the *devil*, so persecuting and ensnaring the *world*, that we are sometimes half inclined to look back and return to Egypt. We are such poor, weak creatures, that we cannot do two things at once. It seems almost impossible to do our duty in that place of life to which God has called us, and not to be absorbed in it and forget our souls. The cares and business and occupations of life appear to drink up all our thoughts, and swallow up all our attention. What are we to do? Where are we to look? How many are exercised with thoughts like these!

I believe the great Scriptural remedy for all who feel such helplessness as I have faintly described, is to look upward to Christ in heaven, and to keep steadily before our eyes His intercession at the right hand of God. We must learn to look UPWARD, away from ourselves and our weakness, and upward to Christ in heaven. We must try to realize daily that Jesus not only died for us and rose again, but that He also lives as our Advocate with the Father, and appears in heaven for us.

This, surely, was the mind of Paul, when he said, "Being reconciled to God by the death of His Son—we shall be saved by His life." (Romans v. 10). This, again, is what he meant when he gave that confident challenge, "Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, yes rather, who is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us!" (Romans 8:34). This, above all, is what he had in view when he told the Hebrews, "He is able also to save to the uttermost, those who come unto God by Him—seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them." (Heb. 7:25).

Now I venture boldly to express a doubt whether modern Christians "look to Jesus" in this point of view, and make as much as they ought of His life of intercession. It is too often a dropped link in our present-day Christianity. We are apt to think only of the atoning DEATH and the precious blood, and to forget the LIFE and priestly office of our great Redeemer! It ought not to be so. We miss much by this forgetfulness of the *whole* truth as it is in Jesus.

What a mine of daily comfort there is in the thought—that we have an Advocate with the Father, who never slumbers or sleeps, whose eye is always upon us, who is continually pleading our cause and obtaining fresh supplies of grace for us, who watches over us in every company and place, and never forgets us, though we, in going to and fro, and doing our daily business, cannot always think of Him! While we are fighting *Amalek* in the valley below, One greater than Moses is holding up His hands for us in heaven, and through His intercession we shall prevail.

Surely, if we have been satisfied with *half* the truth about Jesus hitherto, we ought to say, 'I will live in such fashion no more.' And here let me declare my own firm conviction—that the habit of daily looking to the intercession of Christ is one great safeguard against some modern superstitions. If Jesus did NOT live in heaven as our merciful and faithful High Priest, I could understand a little the craving which exists in many minds for that deadly opiate, which, nowadays, usurps the name and office of spiritual medicine: I mean, habitual confession to *earthly priests!* But I cannot understand it when I read the Epistle to the Hebrews, and see that we have a great High Priest in heaven, who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and who bids us pour out our hearts before Him, and come to Him for grace to help in time of need.

In short, I do not hesitate to assert, that a right view of Christ's priestly office is the true antidote to some of the most dangerous errors of the Church of Rome. So much for the second "look to Jesus." We ought to look habitually to His life and intercession.

III. In the third place, if we would look rightly to Jesus, we must look daily at His example, as our chief standard of holy living. We must all feel, I suspect, and often feel—how hard it is to live a Christian life, by mere *rules* and *regulations.* Scores of circumstances will continually cross our path, in which we find it difficult to see the line of duty, and feel perplexed. Prayer for the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and attention to the practical part of the Epistles, are, undoubtedly, primary resources. But surely it would cut many a knot, and solve many a problem, if we would cultivate the habit of studying the daily behavior of our Lord Jesus, as recorded in the four Gospels, and strive to shape our own behavior by His pattern. Yet this must have been what our Lord meant when He said, "I have given you an example—that you should do as I have done to you." (John 13:15). And this is what Paul meant, when he wrote, "Be followers of me—even as I am of Christ." (1 Cor. 11:1). And this is what John meant when he said, "he who says he abides in Him, ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked." (1 John 2:6).

The chief end for which anyone is said to be predestined--is "to be conformed to the image of His Son." (Romans 8:29) This, says the 17th Article, with true wisdom, is the special character of God's elect, "they are made like the image of God's only begotten Son, Jesus Christ." In the face of such evidence as this, I have a right to say that our "look" to Jesus is very imperfect, if we do not look at His example, and strive to follow it.

Let us consider for a moment what a beautifier and marvelous portrait the four Gospels hold up to our eyes, of the Man Jesus Christ. It is a portrait that extorted the admiration even of a wretched sceptic like Rousseau. It is a portrait which, even to this day, is one of the cardinal difficulties of infidelity, for there never lived the infidel who could face the question, "Tell us, if you refuse to believe the Divine origin of Christianity, tell us who and what Christ was?"

Let us Christians trace all the footsteps of our Master's career from the carpenter's shop at Nazareth to the cross of Calvary. See how in every company and position, by the Sea of Galilee, and in the Temple courts of Jerusalem, by the well of Samaria, in the house Bethany, amidst the sneering Sadducees, or the despised publicans, alone with His faithful disciples, or surrounded by bitter enemies—He is always the same—always holy, harmless, undefiled; always perfect in word and deed.

Mark what a wonderful combination of seemingly opposite qualifications is to be seen in His character. Bold and outspoken in opposing hypocrisy and self-righteousness, tender and compassionate in receiving the chief of sinners. Profoundly wise in arguing before the Sanhedrin; simple, so that a child might understand Him, in teaching the poor. Patient towards His weak disciples; unruffled in temper by the keenest provocation. Considerate for all around Him; sympathizing, self-denying, prayerful, overflowing with love and compassion, utterly unselfish, always about His Father's business, ever going about doing good, continually ministering to others, and never expecting others to minister to Him. What person ever walked on earth, like Jesus of Nazareth!

We may well be humbled and ashamed when we think how unlike the best of us are, to our great Example, and what *poor, blurred copies* of His character we show to mankind. Like careless children at school, we are content to copy those around us, with all their faults, and do not look constantly at the only faultless copy, the One perfect Man, in whom even Satan could find "nothing." (John 14:30). But one thing, at any rate, we must all admit. If Christians, during the last eighteen centuries, had been more like Christ, the Church would certainly have been far more beautiful, and would probably have done far more good to the world.

It is a sorrowful thought, that Christ's example should be so little remembered or looked at, in these latter days. It is a striking illustration of man's mental littleness and inability to grasp more than a portion of the truth. You may lay your hand on a hundred books which profess to grapple with points of doctrine, before you will find one which handles the mighty subject of the *true pattern of Christian practice.* I believe the Church has suffered greatly by neglecting the point of which I now speak. The famous book of Thomas a Kempis may have many defects, I have no doubt, and to some it is even mischievous. But I am sure it would be well if we had many more Christlike men and women, who strive at home and abroad to *imitate Christ.* Let us beware of this error in these latter days. Let us cultivate the daily habit of "looking to Christ as our pattern," as well as our salvation. Let us not forget that a cunning artificer will tell you that he often learns more from a pattern in five minutes—than from the best written rules and directions in an hour. We can never look too steadily at Christ's death and intercession. But we may easily look too little at the blessed steps of His most holy life. Let us shake off this reproach. Let us strive and pray that we may make the tone and temper of Jesus our model and standard in our daily behavior. Let all men see that, as the poet says, "this example has a magnet force," and that we love to follow Him whom we profess to love. "My Master, my Master!" as George Herbert loved to say. "How would my Master have behaved in my position?" should be our constant cry. "Let me go and do likewise." So much for the third "look" at Jesus. We ought to look habitually to His example.

IV. Fourthly and lastly, if we would "look" to Jesus rightly, we must look forward to His second Advent, as the truest fountain of hope and consolation. That the early Christians were always looking forward to a second coming of their risen Master, is a fact beyond all controversy. You cannot read the Epistles and fail to see that one of their chief sources of comfort, was the *hope of His return.* They clung tenaciously to the old promise, "This same Jesus shall come in, like manner as you have seen Him go." (Acts 1:11). In all their trials and persecutions, under Roman Emperors and heathen rulers, they cheered one another with the thought that their own King would soon come again, and plead their cause. Persecutors and oppressors would soon be swept away, and the great Shepherd of the sheep would gather them into a fold of safety. "We look for the Savior." "We wait for the Son of God from heaven." "Yet in a little while, He who shall come will come, and will not tarry." "Be patient unto the coming of the Lord." (Philip. 3:20; 1 Thess. 1:10; Heb. 10:37; James 5:7).

Many, no doubt, in their impatience, misunderstood the times and seasons, and thought that the kingdom of God would immediately appear. But, for all that, it remains a fact that a second personal advent of Christ, was the great hope of the early Church.

Now, I believe firmly that this same second advent was meant to be the hope of the Church in every age of the world. It ought to be the consolation of Christians in these latter days, as much as it was in primitive times. And I doubt whether there ever was an era when it was so useful to keep the second advent of Christ steadily in view, as it is just now. Who can look abroad at public affairs all over the globe, and avoid the impression that this old, bankrupt world needs a new order of things? The cement seems to have fallen out of the walls of human society. On all sides we hear of restlessness, anarchy, lawlessness, envy, jealousy, distrust, suspicion, and discontent. The continuance of evils of every kind, physical, moral, and social—the constantly recurring revolutions, and wars, and famines, and pestilences—the never-ending growth of superstition, skepticism, and unbelief—the bitter strife of political parties—the divisions and controversies of Christians—the overflowing of intemperance and immorality—the boundless luxury and extravagance

of some classes, and the grinding poverty of others—the strikes of workmen—the conflict of labor and capital—the shiftless helplessness of statesmen to devise remedies—the commercial dishonesty—the utter failure of mere secular knowledge to really help mankind—the comparative deadness of Churches—the apparently small results of missions at home and abroad—the universal "distress of nations with perplexity," and dread of something terrible coming. These strange phenomena and symptoms, what do they all mean? Yes—what indeed!

They all seem to tell us, with no uncertain voice, that the world is out of joint, and needs a new administration, and a new King. Like a crying infant in the arms of a stranger, the world is ever fretting, and wailing, and struggling, though it hardly knows why, and will never rest and be quiet until its rightful parent takes it in hand, and puts the stranger aside. As Plato makes Socrates say, in one of his dialogues, before the FIRST advent, "We must wait for some one, be he God, or inspired man, to give us light, and take away darkness from our eyes,"—even so we Christians must fix our hopes upon the SECOND advent, and look and long for the rightful King's appearing.

And who, again, can look round his own private circle, whether great or small, and fail to see many things which are most painful and distressing; things which, like a watcher by a dying pillow, he can only look on and feel deeply, but cannot mend? Think of the ever-flowing stream of sorrow arising from poverty, sickness, disease, and death—from quarrels about money, from incompatibility of temper, from family misunderstandings, from failures in business, from disappointments about children, from separations of families in pursuit of callings. *What hidden skeletons there are in many households! How many aching hearts! How many secret sorrows known only to God!* How many Jacobs in the world, vexed by their children, and refusing to be comforted! How many Absaloms bowing down a father's head by their thanklessness and rebellion! How many Isaacs and Rebeccas daily grieved by self-willed sons! How many weeping widows of Nain! Where is the thoughtful Christian who does not often sigh for a better state of things, and ask himself, "How long, O Lord, faithful and true, how long are we to go on weeping, and working, binding up wounds, and drinking bitter cups, and educating, and parting, and burying, and putting on mourning? When shall the end once be?"

Now, I believe that the true Scriptural source of consolation, in the face of all that troubles us, whether publicly or privately, is to keep steadily before our eyes the second coming of Christ. Once more I say, we must "look forward to Jesus." We must grasp and realize the blessed fact that the rightful King of the world is returning soon, and shall have His own again; that He shall put down that old usurper, the devil, and take away the curse from off the earth. Let us cultivate the habit of daily looking forward to the resurrection of the dead, the gathering together of the saints, the restitution of all things, the banishment of sorrow and sin, and the re-establishment of a new kingdom, of which the rule shall be righteousness.

Any sorrow or trial may be borne, I believe—if men only have a hope of an end. All the sorrows of this world will be cheerfully borne, and we shall work on with a light heart, if we thoroughly believe that Christ is coming again without sin unto salvation.

After all, one principal cause of human unhappiness is the indulgence of *unwarrantable expectations* from anybody or anything here below. I ask my younger readers especially to remember that. The less we expect from statesmen, philosophers, men of money, men of science, ay, even from visible Churches—the happier we shall be. He who leans on staffs like these, will find them pierce his hand. He who drinks only of these fountains, shall thirst again. Let us learn to fix our chief hopes on the second coming of Christ—and work, and watch, and wait confidently—like those who wait for the morning, and know for a certainty that in the time appointed by the Father, the Sun of Righteousness will arise, with healing on His wings. Then, and then alone, we shall not be disappointed.

So much for the fourth and last look to Jesus. We ought to look habitually to His second personal coming, as the hope of the Church and world. He who looks at the cross of Christ is a wise man; he who looks at the intercession and example is wiser still; but he who lives looking at all four objects—the death, the priesthood, the pattern, the second advent of Jesus—he is the wisest of all.

(a) And now let me wind up all by offering a word of **friendly advice** to all into whose hands this paper may fall. I offer it in all affection as one who longs to help you in the right way, who desires to promote in your heart a healthy, vigorous, everyday Christianity, and would gladly guard you against mistakes. Our greatest poet truly says, "We know what we *are*; but we know not what we *may be."*

All before us, is dark and uncertain, and mercifully kept from our eyes. I cannot tell you where the lot of many of my readers may be finally cast on earth, or what they may be called to do and bear before the end comes. But one thing I say confidently—let the keynote of your Christianity, in every quarter of the globe, be the phrase of my text— "Looking to Jesus!" Jesus *dying*, Jesus *interceding*, Jesus the *example*, Jesus *coming* again. Fix your eyes firmly on Him if you would so run as to obtain. Value the pure and reformed branch of Christ's Church, to which you belong, and all her many privileges. Love her services. Labor for her peace. Contend for her prosperity. But for your own personal religion, the salvation of your own soul, take care that your ruling idea is, "Looking to Jesus."

(b) Together with friendly advice, let me offer a **friendly warning**. Beware, if you love life, beware of a Christless religion. A watch without a mainspring, a steam engine without a fire, a solar system without the sun—all these are but faint and feeble images of the utter uselessness of a religion without Christ. And next to a *Christless religion*, beware of a religion in which Christ is not the first, foremost, chief, principal object—the very Alpha in the alphabet of your faith. He who enters upon a vast series of arithmetical calculations, requiring weeks and months of brain-exhausting toil, he knows well that his labor will be all in vain, and his conclusions faulty, if a single figure is wrong in his first line. And he who does not give Christ His rightful place and office in the beginning of his religion, must not be surprised if he never knows anything of joy and peace in believing, and goes cheerless and comfortless on his way to heaven, with "all the voyage of life bound in shallows and in misery."

(c) Finally, may I not say to all, both old and young, with this great text in view, that we shall do well to aim at greater SIMPLICITY in our own personal religion. The early Christians lacked many privileges and advantages that we enjoy. They had no printed books. They worshiped God in dens and caves and private homes, had few and simple "church clothes", and often received the Lord's Supper in vessels of wood, and not of silver or gold. They had little money, no church endowments, no universities. Their creeds were short. Their theological definitions were scanty and few. But what they knew—they knew well. They were men of one book. They knew Whom they believed. If they had wooden communion vessels, they had golden ministers and teachers. They "looked to Jesus" and realized intensely their personal relationship to Jesus. For Jesus they lived, and worked, and died.

But what are we doing? And where are we in the nineteenth century? And what deliverance are we working on earth? With all our countless advantages, our grand old cathedrals, our splendid libraries, our accurate definitions, our elaborate liturgies, our civil liberties, our religious societies, our numerous facilities—we may well doubt whether we are making such a mark on the world as the New Testament Christians made! I know we cannot put the clock back, and return to the *A B C's* of early Christianity. But one thing we can do: we can grasp more firmly, with every returning Christmas, the grand old foundational principles around which our modern Christianity has clustered, and swelled, and grown to its present proportions. Such a principle is that laid down in our text, "Looking unto Jesus." Then let us covenant with ourselves, that for the time to come we will try to run our race, fight our battles, fill our position, serve our generation, like men who are ever "looking to Jesus." So looking while we live—we shall see face to face when we die. And then when the last great gathering takes place, we shall joyfully exchange faith for sight, see as we have been seen, and know as we have been known!

The Power of the Holy Spirit

by J. C. Ryle

There is hope in the Gospel for any man, so long as he lives. There is infinite willingness in Christ to pardon sin. There is infinite power in the Holy Spirit to change hearts. There are many diseases of the body which are incurable. The cleverest doctors cannot heal them. But, thank God! there are no incurable diseases of soul. All manner and quantity of sins can be washed away by Christ! The hardest and most wicked of hearts can be changed.

Reader, I say again, while there is life—there is hope. The oldest, the vilest, the worst of sinners may be saved. Only let him come to Christ, confess his sin, and cry to Him for pardon—only let him cast his soul on Christ, and he shall be cured. The Holy Spirit shall be sent down on his heart, according to Christ's promise, and he shall be changed by His Almighty power, into a new creature.

I never despair of anyone becoming a decided Christian, whatever he may have been in days gone by. I know how great the change is from death to life; I know the mountains of division which seem to stand between some men and heaven; I know the hardness, the prejudices, the desperate sinfulness of the natural heart. But I remember that God the Father made the glorious world out of nothing. I remember that the voice of the Lord Jesus could reach Lazarus when, four days dead, and recall him even from the grave. I remember the amazing victories the Spirit of God has won in every nation under heaven. I remember all this—and feel that I never need despair.

Yes! those very people who now seem most utterly dead in sins, may yet be raised to a new being, and walk before God in newness of life. Why should it not be so? the Holy Spirit is a mighty, merciful, and loving Spirit. He turns away from no man, because of his vileness. He passes by no one, because his sins are black and scarlet. There was nothing in the Corinthians that He should come down and quicken them. Paul reports of them, that they were "fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, homosexuals, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, extortioners." "Such," he says, "were some of you!" Yet even them, the Spirit made alive. "You are washed," he writes, "you are sanctified, you are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor. 6:9-11).

There was nothing in the Colossians that He should visit their hearts. Paul tells us that they walked in "sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desire, and greed, which is idolatry." Yet these also, the Spirit quickened. He made them "put off the old man with his deeds, and put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him" (Col. 3:5-10).

There was nothing in Mary Magdalene that the Spirit should make her soul alive. Once she had been possessed with seven devils; time was, if report is true, that she had been a woman proverbial for vileness and iniquity—yet even her, the Spirit made a new creature, separated her from her sins, brought her to Christ, made her last at the cross, and first at the tomb! Never, never will the Spirit turn away from a soul, because of its corruption. He never has done so—He never will. It is His glory that He has purified the minds of the most impure, and made them temples for His own abode. He may yet take the worst of those who read this tract—and make him a vessel of grace.

Why indeed should it not be so? The Spirit is an Almighty Spirit. He can change the stony heart into a heart of flesh! He can break the strongest bad habits like wax before the fire! He can make the most difficult things seem easy, and the mightiest objections melt away like snow in spring! He can cut the bars of brass, and throw the gates of prejudice wide open! He can fill up every valley, and make every rough place smooth! He has done it often—and He can do it again,

The Spirit can take a Jew—the bitterest enemy of Christianity, the fiercest persecutor of true believers, the strongest stickler for Pharisaical notions, the most prejudiced opposer of Gospel doctrine—and turn that man into an earnest preacher of the very faith he once destroyed. He has done it already. He did it with the Apostle Paul. The Spirit can take a Roman Catholic monk, brought up in the midst of Romish superstition, trained from his infancy to believe false doctrine, and obey the Pope, steeped to the eyes in error—and make that man the clearest upholders of justification by faith the world ever saw! He has done so already. He did it with Martin Luther.

The Spirit can take an English tinker, without learning, patronage, or money—a man at one time notorious for blasphemy and swearing—and make that man write a pious book, which shall stand unrivaled and unequaled in its way, by any since the time of the Apostles. He has done so already—He did it with John Bunyan, the author of "Pilgrim's Progress."

The Spirit can take a sailor, drenched in worldliness and sin—a profligate captain of a slave ship, and make that man a most successful minister of the Gospel; a writer of letters which are a store-house of experimental religion; and of hymns which are known and sung wherever English is spoken. He has done it already. He did it with John Newton. All this the Spirit has done, and much more, of which I cannot speak particularly.

The arm of the Spirit is not shortened! His power is not decayed! He is like the Lord Jesus—the same yesterday, today, and forever. He

is still doing wonders, and will do to the very end. I shall not be surprised to hear, even in this life, that the hardest man I know has become softened, and the proudest has taken his place at the feet of Jesus as a weaned child. I shall not be surprised to meet many on the right hand in the day of judgment, whom I shall leave, when I die, traveling in the broad way. I never despair, because I believe in the power of the Holy Spirit.

We ministers might well despair, when we look at our own performances. We are often sick of ourselves. We might well despair when we look at some who belong to our congregations; they seem as hard and insensible as the nether mill-stone! But we remember the Holy Spirit, and what He has done. We remember the Holy Spirit, and consider that He has not changed. He can come down like fire and melt the hardest hearts; He can convert the worst man or woman among our hearers, and mold their whole character into a new shape. And so we preach on. We hope, because of the Holy Spirit.

Oh, that our hearts would understand that the progress of true religion depends not on human might or power—but on the Lord's Spirit! Oh, that many of them would learn to lean less on ministers, and to pray more for the Holy Spirit! Oh, that all would learn to expect less from schools, and tracts, and ecclesiastical machinery; and, while using all means diligently, would seek more earnestly for the outpouring of the Spirit!

Reader, do you feel the slightest drawing towards God? Do you feel the smallest concern about your immortal soul? Does your conscience tell you this day that you have not yet felt the Spirit's power, and do you want to know what to do? Listen, and I will tell you. For one thing, you must go at once to the Lord Jesus Christ in prayer, and beseech Him to have mercy on you, and send you the Spirit. You must go direct to that open fountain of living waters, the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall receive the Holy Spirit (John 7:39). Begin at once to pray for the Holy Spirit. To not think that you are shut up and cut off from hope—the Holy Spirit is promised to those who ask Him. His very name is the Spirit of Promise, and the Spirit of Life. Give Him no rest, until He comes down and makes you a new heart. Cry mightily unto the Lord—say unto Him, "Bless me, even me also! Quicken me, and make me alive!"

I dare not, for my part, send anxious souls to anyone but Christ. I cannot hold with those who tell men to pray for the Holy Spirit in the first place, in order that they may go to Christ in the second place. I see no warrant of Scripture for saying so. I only see that if men feel they are needy, perishing sinners, they ought to apply, first and foremost, straight and direct to Jesus Christ. I see that He himself says, "If any man thirsts—let him come unto Me and drink" (John vii. 37). I know that it is written, "He has received gifts for men, yes for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them" (Ps.67:18). I know it is His special office to baptize with the Holy Spirit, and that "in Him all fullness dwells." I dare not pretend to be more systematic than the Bible. I believe that Christ is the meeting place between God and the soul. So my first advice to anyone who wants the Spirit, must always be, "go to Jesus, and tell your wants to Him."

For another thing, if you have not yet felt the converting power of the Spirit, you must be diligent in attending those means of grace through which the Spirit works. You must regularly hear that Word which is His sword; you must habitually attend those assemblies where His presence is promised. You must, in short, be found in the way cf the Spirit—if you want the Spirit to do you good. Blind Bartimaeus would never have received sight had he sat lazily at home, and not come forth to sit by the wayside. Zaccheus might never have seen Jesus, and become a child of God, if he had not ran before and climbed up into the sycamore tree. The Spirit is a loving and good Spirit. But he who despises means of grace, resists the Holy Spirit.

Reader, remember these two things. I firmly believe that no man ever acted honestly and perseveringly on these two pieces of advice, who did not, sooner or later, have the Spirit, and find by experience that He is "mighty to save!"

Without Clouds

by J. C. Ryle

"He shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun rises, even **a morning without clouds**; as the tender grass springs out of the earth by clear shining after rain. Although my house be not so with God; yet He has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire." (2 Samuel 23:4-5)

The text which heads this page is taken from a chapter which ought to be very interesting to every Christian. It begins with the touching expression, "These are the last words of David."

Whether that means, "these are the last words which David ever spoke by inspiration as a Psalmist," or "these are among the last sayings of David before his death," signifies little. In either point of view, the phrase suggests many thoughts.

It contains the experience of an old servant of God who had many ups and downs in his life. It is the old soldier remembering his campaigns. It is the old traveler looking back on his journeys.

I. Let us first consider David's humbling confession.

He looks forward with a prophetic eye to the future coming of the Messiah, the promised Savior, the seed of Abraham, and the seed of David. He looks forward to the Advent of a glorious kingdom in which there shall be no wickedness, and righteousness shall be the universal character of all the subjects. He looks forward to the final gathering of a perfect family in which there shall be no unsound members, no defects, no sin, no sorrow, no deaths, no tears. And he says, the light of that kingdom shall be "as the light of the morning when the sun rises, even a morning **without clouds**."

But then he turns to **his own family**, and sorrowfully says, "My house is not so with God." It is not perfect, it is not free from sin, and it has blots and blemishes of many kinds. It has cost me many tears. It is not so as I could wish, and so as I have vainly tried to

make it.

Poor David might well say this! If ever there was a man whose house was full of trials, and whose life was full of sorrows, that man was David. Trials from the envy of his own brethren—trials from the unjust persecution of Saul—trials from his own servants, such as Joab and Ahithophel—trials from a wife, even that Michal who once loved him so much—trials from his children, such as Absalom, Amnon, and Adonijah—trials from his own subjects, who at one time forgot all he had done, and drove him out of Jerusalem by rebellion—trials of all kinds, wave upon wave, were continually breaking on David to the very end of his days. Some of the worst of these trials, no doubt, were the just consequences of his own sins, and the wise chastisement of a loving Father. But we must have hard hearts if we do not feel that David was indeed "a man of sorrows."

But is not this the experience of many of God's noblest saints and dearest children? What careful reader of the Bible can fail to see that Adam, and Noah, and Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and Joseph, and Moses, and Samuel—were all men of many sorrows—and that those **sorrows chiefly arose out of their own homes?**

The plain truth is, that **HOME TRIALS are one of the many means by which God sanctifies and purifies His believing people**. By them He keeps us humble. By them He draws us to Himself. By them He sends us to our Bibles. By them He teaches us to pray. By them He shows us our need of Christ. By them He weans us from the world. By them He prepares us for "a city which has foundations," in which there will be no disappointments, no tears, and no sin. It is no special mark of God's favor when Christians have no trials. **They are spiritual medicines, which poor fallen human nature absolutely needs.** King Solomon's course was one of unbroken peace and prosperity. But it may well be doubted whether this was good for his soul.

Before we leave this part of our subject, let us learn some PRACTICAL LESSONS.

(a) Let us learn that parents cannot give grace to their children, or masters to their servants. We may use all means, but we cannot command success. We may teach, but we cannot convert. We may show those around us, the bread and water of life, but we cannot make them eat and drink it. We may point out the way to eternal life, but we cannot make others walk in it. "It is the Spirit who quickens." Spiritual life is that one thing which the cleverest man of science cannot create or impart. It comes "not of blood, nor of the will of man" (John 1:13). To give life is the grand prerogative of God.

(b) Let us learn not to expect too much from anybody or anything in this fallen world. One great secret of unhappiness is the habit of indulging in **exaggerated expectations**. From money, from marriage, from business, from houses, from children, from worldly honors, from political success—people are constantly expecting what they never find—and the great majority die disappointed. Happy is he who has learned to say at all times, " My soul, waits only upon God—my expectation is from Him" (Psalm 62:5).

(c) Let us learn not to be surprised or fret when trials come. It is a wise saying of Job, "Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward" (Job 5:7). Some, no doubt, have a larger cup of sorrows to drink than others. But few live long without troubles or cares of some kind. The greater our affections—the deeper are our afflictions and the more we love—the more we have to weep. The only certain thing to be predicted about the babe lying in his cradle is this—if he grows up, he will have many troubles, and at last he will die.

(d) Let us learn, lastly, that God knows far better than we do what is the best time for taking away from us those whom we love. The deaths of some of David's children were painfully remarkable, both as to age, manner, and circumstances. When David's little infant lay sick, David thought he would have liked the child to live, and he fasted and mourned until all was over. Yet, when the last breath was drawn, he said, with strong assurance of seeing the child again, "I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me" (2 Samuel 12:23). But when, on the contrary, Absalom died in battle—Absalom the beautiful Absalom—the darling of his heart—but Absalom who died in open sin against God and his father, what did David say then? Hear his hopeless cry, "O Absalom, my son, my son, would God I had died for you!" (2 Samuel 18:33). Alas! None of us know when it is best for ourselves, our children, and our friends to die. We should pray to be able to say, "My times are in Your hands," let it be **when** You will, **where** You will, and **how** You will (Psalm 31:15).

II. Let us consider, secondly, what was the source of David's PRESENT COMFORT in life. He says, "Though my house is not as I could wish, and is the cause of much sorrow, God has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure." And then he adds, "This is all my salvation, and all my desire."

Now this word "covenant" is a deep and mysterious thing, when applied to anything that God does. We can understand what a covenant is between man and **man**. It is an agreement between two people, by which they bind themselves to fulfill certain conditions and do certain things. But who can fully understand a covenant made by the Eternal **God**? It is something far above us and out of sight. It is a phrase by which He is graciously pleased to accommodate Himself to our poor weak faculties, but at best we can only grasp a little of it.

The covenant of God to which David refers as his comfort must mean that everlasting agreement between the Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity which has existed from all eternity for the benefit of all the living members of Christ.

It is a mysterious and ineffable arrangement whereby all things necessary for the salvation of our souls, our present peace, and our final glory, are fully and completely provided, and all this by the joint work of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The **redeeming** work of God the Son by dying as our Substitute on the cross—the **drawing** work of God the Father by choosing and drawing us to the Son—and the **sanctifying** work of the Holy Spirit in awakening, quickening, and renewing our fallen nature—are all contained in this covenant—along with everything that the soul of the believer needs between grace and glory.

Of this covenant, the Second Person of the Trinity is the Mediator (Heb. 12:24). Through Him all the blessings and privileges of the covenant are conveyed to every one of His believing members. And when the Bible speaks of God making a covenant with man, as in the words of David, it means with man in Christ as a member and part of the Son. They are His mystical body, and He is their Head, and through the Head all the blessings of the eternal covenant are conveyed to the body. Christ, in one word, is "the Surety of the covenant," and through Him believers receive its benefits. This is the great covenant which David had in view.

True Christians would do well to think about this covenant, remember it, and roll the burden of their souls upon it far more than they do. There is unspeakable consolation in the thought that the salvation of our souls has been provided for from all eternity—and is not a mere affair of yesterday. Our names have long been in the Lamb's book of life. Our pardon and peace of conscience through Christ's blood—our strength for duty—our comfort in trial—our power to fight Christ's battles—were all arranged for us from endless ages, and long before we were born. Here upon earth we pray, and read, and fight, and struggle, and groan, and weep, and are often sorely hindered in our journey. But we ought to remember that **an Almighty eye** has long been upon us—and that we have been the subjects of divine provision, though we knew it not.

Above all, Christians should never forget that the everlasting covenant is "ordered in all things and sure." The least things in our daily life are working together for good, though we may not see it at the time. The very hairs of our head are all numbered—and not a sparrow falls to the ground without our Father. There is no **luck** or **chance** in anything that happens to us. The least events in our life are parts of an everlasting design in which God has foreseen and arranged everything for the good of our souls.

Let us all try to cultivate the habit of remembering the everlasting covenant. It is a doctrine full of strong consolation—if it is properly used. It was not meant to destroy our responsibility. It is widely different from Mohammedan fatalism. It is specially intended to be **a refreshing cordial for practical use in a world full of sorrow and trial.** We ought to remember, amid the many sorrows and disappointments of life, that "what we don't know **now**—we shall know **hereafter**." There is a meaning and a "needs be" in every "bitter cup" that we have to drink, and a wise cause for every loss and bereavement under which we mourn.

After all, how little we know! We are like children who look at a half-finished building, and have not the least idea what it will look like when it is completed. They see masses of stone, and brick, and rubbish, and timber, and mortar, and scaffolding, and dirt, and all in apparent confusion. But the architect who designed the building sees order in all, and quietly looks forward with joy to the day when the whole building will be finished, and the scaffolding removed and taken away. It is even so with us. We cannot grasp the meaning of many a dark providence in our lives, and are tempted to think that all around us is confusion. But we should try to remember that **the great Architect in heaven** is always doing wisely and well, and that we are always being "led by the right way to a city of habitation" (Psalm 107:7). The resurrection morning will explain all. It is a quaint but wise saying of an old divine, that "true faith has bright eyes, and can see even in the dark."

It is recorded of Barnard Gilpin, a Reformer who lived in the days of the Marian martyrdoms, and was called the Apostle of the North, that he was famous for never murmuring or complaining, whatever happened to him. In the worst and blackest times he used to be always saying, "It is all in God's everlasting covenant, and must be for good." Towards the close of Queen Mary's reign, he was suddenly summoned to come up from Durham to London, to be tried for heresy, and in all probability, like Ridley and Latimer, to be burned. The good man quietly obeyed the summons, and said to his mourning friends, "It is in the covenant, and must be for good." On his journey from Durham to London, his horse fell, and his leg was broken, and he was laid up at a roadside inn. Once more he was asked, "What do you think of this?" Again he replied, "It is all in the covenant, and must be for good." And so it turned out. Weeks and weeks passed away before his leg was healed, and he was able to resume his journey. But during those weeks the unhappy Queen Mary died, the persecutions were stopped, and the worthy old Reformer returned to his northern home rejoicing. "Did I not tell you," he said to his friends, "that all was working together for good?"

Well would it be for us if we had something of Barnard Gilpin's faith, and could make practical use of the everlasting covenant as he did. Happy is the Christian who can say from his heart these words—

> "I know not the way I am going,
> But well do I know my Guide;
> With a childlike trust I give my hand
> To the mighty Friend by my side.
> The only thing that I say to Him,
> As He takes it, is—'Hold it fast;
> Allow me not to lose my way,
> And bring me home at last."

III. Let us consider, lastly, what was King David's hope for the FUTURE. That hope, beyond doubt, was the glorious advent of the Messiah at the end of the world, and the setting up of a kingdom of righteousness, at the final "restitution of all things" (Acts 3:21).

Of course king David's views of this kingdom were dim and vague compared to those which are within reach of every intelligent reader of the New Testament. He was not ignorant of the coming of Messiah to suffer, for he speaks of it in the 22nd Psalm. But he saw far behind it the coming of Messiah to reign, and his eager faith overleaped the interval between the two Advents. That his mind was fixed upon the promise, that the "seed of the woman should" one day completely "bruise the serpent's head," and that the curse should be taken off the earth, and the effects of Adam's fall completely removed, I feel no doubt at all. The Church of Christ would have done well if she had walked in David's steps, and given as much attention to the Second Advent as David did.

The figures and comparisons which David uses in speaking of the advent and future kingdom of the Messiah are singularly beautiful, and admirably fitted to exhibit the benefits which it will bring to the Church and the earth. The Second Advent of Christ shall be "as the light of the morning when the sun rises, even a morning **without clouds**; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain." Those words deserve a thousand thoughts. Who can look around him, and consider the state of the world in which we live, and not be obliged to confess that clouds and darkness are now on every side? "The whole creation groans and travails in pain" (Romans 8:22). Look where we will, we see confusion, quarrels, wars between nations, helplessness of statesmen, discontent and grumbling of the lower classes, excessive luxury among the rich, extreme poverty among the poor, intemperance, impurity, dishonesty, swindling, lying, cheating, covetousness, heathenism, superstition, formality among Christians, decay of vital religion—these are the things which we see continually over the whole globe—in Europe, Asia, Africa, and America. These are the things which defile the face of creation, and prove that the devil is "the prince of this world," and the kingdom of God has not yet come. These are clouds indeed, which often hide the sun from our eyes.

But there is a good time coming, which David saw far distant, when this state of things shall be completely changed. There is a kingdom coming, in which holiness shall be the rule, and sin shall have no place at all.

Who can look around him in his own neighborhood, and fail to see within a mile of his own house that the consequences of sin lie heavily on earth, and that sorrow and trouble abound? Sickness, and pain, and death come to all classes, and spare none, whether rich or poor. The young often die before the old, and the children before the parents. Bodily suffering of the most fearful description, and incurable disease, make the existence of many miserable. Widowhood, and childlessness, and solitariness, tempt many to feel weary of life, though everything which money can obtain is within their reach. Family quarrels, and envies, and jealousies break up the peace of many a household, and are a worm at the root of many a rich man's happiness. Who can deny that all these things are to be seen on every side of us? There are many 'clouds' now.

Will nothing end this state of things? Is creation to go on groaning and travailing forever after this fashion? Thanks be to God, the Second Advent of Christ supplies an answer to these questions. The Lord Jesus Christ has not yet finished His work on behalf of man. He will come again one day (and perhaps very soon) to set up a glorious kingdom, in which the consequences of sin shall have no place at all. It is a kingdom in which there shall be no pain and no disease, in which "the inhabitant shall no more say—I am sick" (Isa. 33:24). It is a kingdom in which there shall be no partings, no moves, no changes, and no good-byes. It is a kingdom in which there shall be no deaths, no funerals, no tears, and no mourning worn. It is a kingdom in which there shall be no quarrels, no losses, no crosses, no disappointments, no wicked children, no bad servants, no faithless friends. When the last trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, there will be a grand gathering together of all God's people, and when we awake up after our Lord's likeness we shall be satisfied (Psalm 17:15). Where is the Christian heart that does not long for this state of things to begin? Well may we take up the last prayer in the Book of Revelation, and often cry, "Come quickly, Lord Jesus" (Rev. 22:20).

(a) And now, have we troubles? Where is the man or woman on earth who can say, "I have none"? **Let us take them all to the Lord Jesus Christ.** None can comfort like Him. He who died on the cross to purchase forgiveness for our sins, is sitting at the right hand of God with a heart full of love and sympathy. He knows what sorrow is, for He lived thirty-three years in this sinful world, and suffered Himself being tempted, and saw suffering every day. And He has not forgotten it. When He ascended into heaven, to sit at the right hand of the Father, He took a perfect human heart with Him. "He can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities" (Heb. 4:15). He can feel. Almost His last thought upon the cross was for His own mother, and He cares for weeping and bereaved mothers still.

He would have us never forget that our departed friends in Christ are not lost, but only gone before. We shall see them again in the day of gathering together, for "those who sleep in Jesus, will God bring with Him" (1 Thes. 4:14). We shall see them in renewed bodies, and know them again, but better, more beautiful, more happy than we ever saw them on earth. Best of all, we shall see them with the comfortable feeling that we meet to part no more.

(b) Have we troubles? **Let us never forget the everlasting covenant** to which old David clung to the end of his days. It is still in full force. It is not cancelled. It is the property of every believer in Jesus, whether rich or poor, just as much as it was the property of the son of Jesse. **Let us never give way to a fretting, murmuring, complaining spirit. Let us firmly believe at the worst of times, that every step in our lives is ordered by the Lord, with perfect wisdom and perfect love, and that we shall see it all at last.** Let us not doubt that He is always doing all things well. He is good in giving—and equally good in taking away.

(c) Finally, have we troubles? **Let us never forget that one of the best of remedies and most soothing medicines is to try to do good to others, and to be useful.** Let us lay ourselves out to make the sorrow less and the joy greater, in this sin-burdened world. There is always some good to be done within a few yards of our own doors. Let every Christian strive to do it, and to relieve either bodies or minds.

> "To comfort and to bless,
> To find a balm for woe,
> To tend the lone and fatherless,
> Is angel's work below."

Selfish feeding on our own troubles, and continual poring over our sorrows, are one secret of the melancholy misery in which many spend their lives. If we trust in Jesus Christ's blood, let us remember His example. He ever "went about doing good" (Acts 10:38). He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister—as well as to give His life a ransom for many. Let us try to be like Him. Let us walk in the steps of the good Samaritan, and give help wherever help is really needed. Even a kind word spoken in season is often a mighty blessing. That Old Testament promise is not yet worn out—"Blessed is the man that provides for the sick and needy—the Lord shall deliver him in the time of trouble." (Psalm 41:1)

The Lord's Garden

by J. C. Ryle

"A **garden** enclosed is My sister, My spouse." Song of Solomon 4:12

The Lord Jesus Christ has a garden. It is the company of all who are true believers in Him. They are His garden.

Viewed in one light, believers are Jesus Christ's **SPOUSE**. They are all joined to Him by an everlasting covenant that cannot be broken; wedded to Him by the marriage of faith—taken by Him to be His forever, with all their debts and liabilities, with all their faults and imperfections. Their old name is gone—they have no name but that of their Bridegroom. God the Father regards them as

one with His dear Son. Satan can lay no charge against them. They are the Lamb's wife—"My Beloved is mine, and I am His" (Song. 2:16).

Viewed in another light, believers are Christ's **SISTER**. They are like Him in many things. They have His Spirit—they love what He loves, and hate what He hates—they count all His members brethren—through Him they have the spirit of adoption, and can say of God, "He is my Father." Faint indeed is their resemblance to their elder Brother! And still they are like.

Viewed in a third light, believers are Christ's **GARDEN**. Let us see how and in what way.

1. Jesus calls His people a garden, because **they are altogether different from the men of the world**. The world is a wilderness—it brings forth little but thorns and thistles—it is fruitful in nothing but sin. The children of this world are an untilled wilderness in God's sight. With all their arts and sciences, intellect and skill, eloquence and statesmanship, poetry and refinement—with all this they are a wilderness, barren of repentance, faith, holiness, and obedience to God. The Lord looks down from heaven, and where He sees no grace, there the Lord can see nothing but a "wilderness" state of things. The Lord Jesus Christ's believing people are the only green spot on the earth—the only oasis amid barren deserts—they are His garden.

He calls His people a garden, because **they are sweet and beautiful to His mind**. He looks on the world, and it grieves Him to the heart—He looks on the little flock of His believing people, and is well pleased. He sees in them the fruit of His travail, and is satisfied. He rejoices in spirit when He sees the kingdom revealed to babes, though the wise and prudent receive it not. As in the day of Noah's sacrifice, He smells a sweet aroma—and is refreshed. It is very wonderful, very mysterious! Believers are vile in their own eyes, and feel themselves miserable sinners; yet Jesus says, "You are all fair—sweet is your voice—your countenance is lovely—beautiful as Tirzah, lovely as Jerusalem, fair as the moon, and clear as the sun" (Song. 1:15, 4:7, 2:14, 6:10, etc.) **Oh, the depths! It sounds incomprehensible and almost incredible; but it is true!**

He calls His people a garden, because **He delights to walk among them**. He sees the children of this world—but He mingles not with them. **His eyes are on all their ways**, but He does not come down to talk with them, as He did to Abraham, like a man with his friend.

On the other hand, He loves to walk among His candle-sticks, and see whether the light burns brightly. He loves to be present in the assemblies of His saints, and to come in and sup with them, and they with Him. He loves to come with His Father, and make His abode with His disciples—and wheresoever two or three are gathered in His name, there is He. He loves to come into His garden and eat His pleasant fruits; to go down to the beds of spices, and gather lilies; to see whether the vine flourishes, and the tender grape appears, and the pomegranates bud forth (Song. 7:12). In short, He holds special communion with His people, and deals intimately with them, as He does not with the world.

He calls His people a garden, because **they are useful, and bear fruit and flowers**. Where is the real use of the children of this world? Of what value are they, while they continue unconverted? They are unprofitable tenants and worthless cumberers of the ground. They bring no glory to the Lord that bought them—they fulfill not their part in creation—they stand alone in the world of created beings, not doing the work for which their Maker meant them. The heavens declare the glory of God—the trees, the corn, the grass, the flowers, the streams, the birds speak forth His praise—but the man of the world does nothing to show that he cares for God, or serves God, or loves God, or feels grateful for Christ's redeeming death.

The Lord's people are not so. They bring Him some revenue of glory. They bear some little fruit, and are not altogether barren and unprofitable servants. Compared to the world, they are a garden.

2. **The Lord's garden has a distinctive peculiarity about it. It is a garden ENCLOSED.**

There is an enclosure around believers; or else they never would be saved. This is the secret of their safety. It is not **their** faithfulness, their strength, or their love, it is the wall around them which prevents their being lost. They are a "garden enclosed."

They are enclosed by God **the Father's everlasting election**. Long before they were born—long before the foundations of the world, God **knew** them, **chose** them, and **appointed** them to obtain salvation by Jesus Christ. The children of this world do not like to hear this doctrine proclaimed. It humbles man, and leaves him no room to boast. But whether it is abused or not—the doctrine of election is true. It is the corner-stone of the believer's foundation, that he was chosen in Christ before the world began. Who can rightly estimate the strength of this enclosure?

They are enclosed **by the special love of God the Son**. The Lord Jesus is the Savior of all men—but He is specially the Savior of those who believe. He has power over all flesh—but He gives eternal life to those who are specially given to Him, in a way that He does to none others. He shed His blood on the cross for all—but He only washes those who have part in Him. He invites all—but He quickens whom He will, and brings them to glory. He prays for them—He prays not for the world. He intercedes for them—that they may be kept from evil, that they may be sanctified by the truth, that their faith fail not. Who can fully describe the blessedness of this enclosure?

They are enclosed by **the effectual working of God the Holy Spirit**. The Spirit calls them out from the world, and separates them as effectually as if a wall were built between them and it. He puts in them new hearts, new minds, new tastes, new desires, new sorrows, new joys, new wishes, new pleasures, new longings. He gives them new eyes, new ears, new affections, new opinions. He makes them new creatures; they are born again, and with a new birth they begin a new existence. Mighty indeed is the transforming power of the Holy Spirit! The believer and the world are completely put asunder, and everlastingly separated. You may place a believer and an unbeliever together, marry them, join them under one roof, but you cannot unite them any more into one piece. The one is part of the "garden enclosed," and the other is not. **Effectual calling is a barrier that cannot be broken.**

Who can tell the comfort of this threefold wall of enclosure! Believers are enclosed by **election**, enclosed by **washing** and **intercession**, enclosed by **calling** and **regeneration**. Great is the consolation of these threefold bands of love around us, the love of God the Father, the love of God the Son, the love of God the Holy Spirit! A threefold cord is not easily broken.

Does any reader suppose for a moment that all this was not needed? I believe that nothing short of this threefold enclosure could save the Lord's garden from utter ruin. Without election, intercession, and regeneration—there is not one soul who would get to heaven. The wild boar out of the woods would break in and devour—the roaring lion would come in and trample all under his feet. The devil would soon lay the Lord's garden level with the ground.

Blessed be God for this, that we are "a garden enclosed!" Blessed be God, our final safety hangs not on anything of our own—not on our graces and feelings—not on our degree of sanctification—not on our perseverance in well-doing—not on our love—not on our growth in grace—not on our prayers and Bible-readings—not even on our faith. It hangs on nothing else but the work of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. If this three-fold work encloses us, who shall overthrow our hope? If God be for us, who can be against us?

Adam had a heart free from sin. Adam was strong in innocency, and undefiled by contact with bad examples and corrupt neighbors. Adam was on vantage ground, a thousand times higher than we now occupy—and yet Adam fell before temptation. There was no enclosure round him, no wall to keep Satan out, no barrier round the first flower of the Lord's garden—and see how Adam fell!

Let believers open their sleepy eyes—and try to understand the value of their privileges! This is the most blessed part of the Lord's garden. It is a "garden enclosed." I believe if there was no election, there would be no salvation. I never saw a man who would be saved if it depended in any wise on himself. Let us all thank the Lord Jesus, every day, and thank Him from our hearts, that His people are a chosen and guarded people, and that His garden is nothing less than "a garden enclosed."

3. The Lord's garden is not empty—it is always full of **FLOWERS**. It has had many in time past, it has many at the time present. Believers are the flowers that fill the Lord's garden.

I will mention two things about the flowers in the garden of the Lord Jesus. In some things they are all exactly like one another. In some things they are as various and diverse as the flowers in the gardens of this world.

In some things they are all ALIKE.

(1) They have all been **transplanted**. Not one of the Lord's flowers grew naturally in His garden. They were all born children of wrath, even as others. No man is born with grace in his heart. Every believer among the Lord's people was at one time at enmity with Him, and in a state of condemnation. It was the grace of God that first called him out of the world. It was the Spirit of Christ who made him what he is, and planted him in the garden of the Lord. In this the Lord's people are all alike—they are all transplanted flowers.

(2) The Lord's flowers are all alike in their **root**. In outward things they may differ, but underneath they are all the same. They are all rooted and grounded on Jesus Christ. Believers may worship in different places, and belong to different churches, but their foundation is the same—the cross and the blood of Jesus.

(3) The Lord's flowers are all at their **beginning weak**. They do not come to full maturity at once. They are at first like new-born babes, tender and delicate, and needing to be fed with milk, and not with strong meat. They are soon checked and thrown back. All begin in this way.

(4) The Lord's flowers all **need the light of the sun**. Flowers cannot live without light. Believers cannot live comfortably unless they see much of the face of Jesus Christ. To be ever looking on Him, feeding on Him, communing with Him—this is the hidden spring of the life of God in man's soul.

(5) The Lord's flowers all **need the dews of the Spirit**. Flowers wither without moisture. Believers need daily, hourly, to be renewed by the Holy Spirit in the spirit of their minds. We cannot live on old grace, if we would be fresh, living, real Christians. We must be daily more 'filled with the Spirit'. Every chamber in the inward temple must be filled.

(6) The Lord's flowers are all **in danger of weeds**. Flower-beds need constant weeding. Believers need daily to search and see that they do not let besetting sins grow on undisturbed. These are the things that choke the actings of grace, and chill the influences of the Spirit. All are in peril of this—all should beware.

(7) The Lord's flowers all **require pruning and cutting**. Flowers left alone soon dwindle and grow small. No careful gardener leaves his roses alone all the year round. Just so believers need stirring, shaking, mortifying—or else they become sleepy—and incline like Lot to 'settle down by Sodom'. And if they are slow about the work of pruning, God will often take it in hand for them.

(8) The Lord's flowers all **grow**. None but hypocrites, and wolves in sheep's clothing, and 'painted Christians', stand still. True believers are never long the same. It is their desire to go on from grace to grace, strength to strength, knowledge to knowledge, faith to faith, holiness to holiness. Visit a border of the Lord's garden after two or three years' absence, and you will see this growth. If you do not see growth—you may well suppose there is a worm at the root. Life grows—but death stands still and decays.

But while the Lord's flowers are all alike in some things, they are **VARIOUS and DIVERSE** in others, even as the flowers in our own gardens. Let us consider this point a little.

Believers have many things in COMMON—one Lord, one faith, one baptism of the Spirit, one hope, one foundation, one reverence for the Word, one delight in prayer, one newness of heart. And yet there are some things in which they are not one. Their general experience is the same, and their title to heaven the same—and yet there are **VARIETIES** in their specific experience. There are shades of diversity in their views and feelings. They are not so altogether and completely one that they can quite understand each other in all things, at all times, and in all points. Very important is it to bear this in mind! Believers are—one in great principles, not one in all particulars—one in reception of the whole truth, not one in the proportion they give to the parts of truth—one in the root, but not one in the flower—one in the hidden part that only the Lord Jesus sees, not one in the visible part that is seen of the world.

You cannot understand your brother or sister in some things. You could not **do** as they do; **speak** as they speak; **act** as they act; **laugh** as they laugh; **admire** what they admire. Oh, be not hasty to condemn them! Make them not offenders for a word. Do not set them down in a low place because they and you have little in common—few harmonizing and responding strings in your hearts—

because you soon come to a standstill in communing with them, and discover that they and you have only a limited extent of ground in common! Write it down on the tablets of your heart, that there are many schools, orders, classes, diversities of Christians. You may all be in the Lord's garden, and be united on grand doctrines—and yet for all that, the Lord's garden is made up of various sorts of flowers! All His flowers are useful—none must be despised. And yet His garden contains widely different sorts.

(1) Some that grow in the Lord's garden are like the flowers which are **brilliant and SHOWY in color—but not sweet**. You see them afar off, and they attract the world's eye, and their tints are beautiful, but you can say no more.

These are frequently the public Christians—the popular preachers—the speakers on platforms—the leaders of listening assemblies—the people talked of, and pointed at, and run after. Such people are the tulips, and sunflowers, and peonies, and dahlias of the Lord's garden—brilliant, flamboyant, bright and glorious in their way—but not sweet.

(2) Some are like those flowers which **make no show at all—and yet are the SWEETEST**.

These are the Christians whom the world never hears of—they rather shrink from public observation. They hold on the even tenor of their way, and pass silently on towards home—but they **sweeten** all around them.

These are those who are **rare** and hard to find—but the better they are known, the more they are loved. Ask their true character in their own homes, and in their families—ask husbands, wives, children, servants, their character—and you will soon discover that not a tenth part of their beauty and excellence is known by the world. The nearer you go—the more perfume will these dwellers in the Lord's garden give out. These are the Lord's violets—valued by only few, but to those who know them, oh, how sweet!

(3) Some in the Lord's garden are like those flowers **which cannot live in cold weather**.

These are the Christians who have but a little strength—who faint in the day of adversity—who only flourish when everything around them is smooth and warm. A cold wind of **trial**, and unexpected frost of **affliction**—nips them and cuts them down. But the Lord Jesus is very merciful—He will not allow them to be tempted above what they can endure. He plants them in sheltered and sunny places of His garden. He protects them and hedges them round by strong plants, to break the cold. Let no man despise them. They are the Lord's flowers—beautiful in their place and in their way.

(4) Some in the Lord's garden are like those **hardy flowers which flower even in winter**.

These are those **rough** Christians who never seem to feel any trials—whom nothing, either of opposition or affliction, appears to move. Doubtless there is not that softness and sweetness about them that we admire in others. We miss that lovable delicacy which in some people is such an unexplainable charm. They chill us sometimes by their harshness and lack of sympathy—when compared to many we know. And yet let no man despise them. They are the crocuses in the garden of the Lord, beautiful in their place and way, and valuable in their own season.

(5) Some in the Lord's garden are **never so sweet as after STORM**.

These are the Christians who **show most grace under trial and affliction**. In the day of sunshine and prosperity they become careless—they need the shower of some sorrow to come down on them, to make their full excellency appear. There is more beauty of holiness about their tears, than about their smiles—they are more like Jesus when they weep, than when they laugh. These are the roses of the Lord's garden—lovely and sweet and beautiful at all times—but never so much so as after storm.

(6) Some in the Lord's garden are **never so sweet as at NIGHT**.

These are the believers who **need constant trial** to keep them close to the throne of grace. They cannot bear the sunshine of prosperity—they become careless in prayer, sleepy about the Word, listless about heaven, too fond of nestling with some beloved idol in the corner of this world. Such people the Lord Jesus often keeps under a **cloud**, to preserve them in a right frame. He sends wave after wave, trouble after trouble, to make them sit like Mary at His feet—and be near the cross. It is the very darkness they are obliged to walk in, which makes them so sweet.

(7) Some in the Lord's garden are **never so sweet as when CRUSHED**.

These are the Christians whose reality comes out most under some **tremendous and uncommon judgment**. The winds and storms of heavy affliction roll over them, and then, to the astonishment of the world—the spices flow out! I once saw a young woman who had lain on a bed six years in a garret, with a spinal complaint, helpless, motionless, cut off from everything that could make this world enjoyable. But she belonged to the garden of Jesus—she was not alone, for He was with her. You would have thought she would have been gloomy—but she was all **brightness**. You would have expected her to be sorrowful—but she was ever **rejoicing**. You would suppose she was weak and needed comfort—but she was strong and able to **comfort** others. You would fancy she must have felt dark—but she seemed to me all **light**. You would imagine her countenance was grave—but it was full of calm smiles, and the gushing forth of inward **peace**. You would have pardoned her almost if she had murmured—but she breathed of nothing but perfect happiness and **contentment**. **The crushed flowers in the Lord's garden are sometimes exceeding sweet!**

(8) Some of the flowers in the Lord's garden are **never fully valued until they are dead.**

These are those humble believers who, like Dorcas, are full of good works and active love towards others. These are those unostentatious ones who dislike profession and publicity, and love to go about, like their Lord and Master, doing good to souls—visiting the fatherless and the widows, pouring in balm on wounds which this heartless world neither knows nor cares for—ministering to the friendless, helping the destitute—preaching the gospel not to 'silk and velvet', but to the poor.

These are not noticed by this generation—but the Lord Jesus knows them—and His Father also! When they are dead and gone, their work and labor of love all comes out. It is written with a diamond on the hearts of those they have assisted—it cannot be hidden. They speak being dead, though they were silent when living. We know their worth when gone, if we did not while we had them with us. The tears of those who have been fed in soul or body by their hand, tell forth to the wondering world that some have gone home

whose place cannot easily be supplied, and that a gap is made which it will be hard to fill up. These shall never have that wretched epitaph, "Departed without being desired." These are the lavender in the Lord's garden—never so much appreciated and admired as when cut off and dead.

And now let me wind up with a few words of **PRACTICAL APPLICATION**—

There is one thing about the Lord's garden, which I see nothing like in this world's flowers.

The 'flowers of this world' all die, and wither and lose their sweetness, and decay, and come to nothing at last. The fairest flowers are not really everlasting. The oldest and strongest of nature's children comes to an end.

It is not so with 'the Lord's flowers'. **The children of grace can never die!** They may 'sleep' for a season—they may be taken away when they have served their generation, and done their work. The Lord is continually coming down to His garden and gathering His "lilies"—laying flowers in His bosom one after the other. But the Lord's flowers shall all rise again.

When the Lord comes again the second time, He shall bring His people with Him. His flowers shall live once more—more bright, more sweet, more lovely, more beautiful, more glorious, more pure, more shining, more fair! They shall have a glorious body like their Lord's—and shall flourish forever in the courts of our God!

Reader, are you in the Lord's garden—or are you in the wilderness of this world?

You must be in one or the other. You must take your choice. Which have you chosen, and which do you choose now? The Lord Jesus would gladly transplant you.

He strives with you by His Spirit. He would gladly add you to the number of His beloved ones. He knocks at the door of your heart by word and by providence. He whispers to your conscience, "Awake, arise, repent, be converted, and come away!"

Oh, do not turn away from Him who speaks! Resist not the Holy Spirit. Do not choose your place in the wilderness—but in the garden. Awake, arise, and turn away from the world!

Reader! the wilderness—or the garden! Which will you have?

If the wilderness, you will have your own way, run wild, grow to waste, bring forth fruit and flowers to yourself, become a barren, unprofitable, useless plant, live unloved and unlovable to yourself, and at last be gathered in the bundle with the tares, and burned in hell!

If the garden—you will not have your own way. But you will have what is far better, you will have God and Christ for your own. You will be cultivated, watered, tended, moved, pruned, trained by the Lord Jesus Himself—and at the last, your name shall be found in the eternal paradise-garden of the Lord!

"A **garden** enclosed is My sister, My spouse." Song of Solomon 4:12

The Whole Family!

by J. C. Ryle

"The *whole family* in heaven and earth." Ephesians 3:15

Reader,
Look at the words which form the title of this tract, and ponder them well. They are words which ought to stir some feelings in our minds at any time, and especially at *Christmas*. There lives not the man or woman on earth, who is not a member of some "family." The poorest as well as the richest, has his kith and kin, and can tell you something of "his family."

Family gatherings at Christmas, we all know, are very common. Thousands of firesides are crowded then, if at no other time of the year. The young man in town snatches a few days from business, and takes a run down to "the old folks at home." The young woman gets a short holiday, and comes to visit her father and mother. Brothers and sisters meet for a few hours. Parents and children look one another in the face. How much there is to talk about! How many questions to be asked! How many interesting things to be told! Happy indeed is that fireside which sees gathered round it at Christmas, "the whole family!"

Family gatherings at Christmas are natural, and right, and good. I approve them with all my heart. It does me good to see them kept up. They are one of the very few pleasant things which have survived the fall of man. Next to the grace of God, I see no principle which unites people so much in this sinful world—as family feeling. Community of blood is a most powerful tie. I have often observed that people will stand up for their relations, merely because they are their relations—and refuse to hear a word against them—even when they have no sympathy with their tastes and ways. Anything which helps to keep up family feeling ought to be commended. It is a wise thing, when it can be done, to gather together at Christmas "the whole family."

Family gatherings, nevertheless, are often *sorrowful* things. It would be strange indeed, in such a world as this, if they were not. Few are the family circles which do not show gaps and vacant places as years pass away. Changes and deaths make sad havoc as time goes on. Thoughts will rise up within us, as we grow older, about faces and voices no longer with us, which no Christmas merriment can entirely keep down. When the younger members of the family have once begun to shift for themselves and launch forth into the world, the old heads may long survive the scattering of the nest. But after a certain time, it seldom happens that you see together "the

whole family."

And now, reader, let me take occasion from Christmas to tell you of a great family to which I want you to belong. It is a family despised by many, and not even known by some; but it is a family of far more importance than any family on earth. To belong to it entitles a man to far greater privileges than to be the son of a king. It is the family of which Paul speaks to the Ephesians, when he tells them of the "whole family in heaven and earth." It is the *family of God.*

Reader, give me your attention while I try to describe this family, and recommend it to your notice. I do not wish to mar your Christmas merriment, or to lessen the joy of your Christmas gathering, wherever it may be. I only want to remind you of a better family, even a heavenly one, and of the great benefits which membership of that family conveys. I want you to be found one of that family, when its gathering shall come at last—a gathering without *separation*, or *sorrow*, or tears. Hear me while, as a minister of Christ and friend to your soul—I talk for a few minutes about *"the whole family in heaven and earth."*

I. First of all—what is this family?

II. Secondly—what is its present position?

III. Thirdly—what are its future prospects?

I wish to unfold these three things before you, and I invite your serious consideration of them. Our Christmas gatherings on earth must have an end one day. Our last earthly Christmas must come. Happy indeed, is that Christmas which finds us prepared to meet God!

I. What is that family which the Bible calls "the whole family in heaven and earth"? Of whom does it consist?

The family before us consists of all real Christians—of all who have the Spirit—of all true believers in Christ—of the saints of every age, and church, and nation, and tongue. It includes the blessed company of all faithful people. It is the same as the election of God—the household of faith—the mystical body of Christ—the bride—the living temple—the sheep that never perish—the Church of the first-born. All these expressions are only "the family of God" under other names.

Membership in the family of God, does not depend on any earthly connection. It comes not by natural birth—but by *new birth*. Ministers cannot impart it to their hearers. Parents cannot give it to their children. You may be born in the godliest family in the land, and enjoy the richest means of grace a church can supply—and yet never belong to the family of God. To belong to it, you must be born again. None but the Holy Spirit can make a living member of this family. It is His special office and prerogative, to bring into the Church such as shall be saved. Those who are born again, are "born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man—but of God." (John 1:13.)

Reader, do you ask the reason of this name, which the Bible gives to the company of all true Christians? Would you like to know why they are called "a family"? Listen, and I will tell you.

1. True Christians are called a "family"—because they have all one Father. They are all children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. They are all born of one Spirit. They are all sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty. They have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby they cry, Abba Father. (Gal. 3:26; John 3:8; 2 Cor. 4:18; Romans 8:15.) They do not regard God with slavish fear—as an austere Being, only ready to punish them. They look up to Him with tender confidence as a reconciled and loving parent—as One forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin, to all who believe on Jesus; and full of pity even to the least and feeblest. The words, "*Our Father* who is in heaven," are no mere form in the mouth of true Christians. No wonder they are called God's "family."

2. True Christians are called "a family"—because they all rejoice in one name. That name is the name of their great Head and Elder Brother, even Jesus Christ the Lord. Just as a common family name is the uniting link to all the members of a Highland clan so does the name of Jesus tie all believers together in one vast family. As members of outward visible Churches they have various names and distinguishing appellations. As living members of Christ, they all, with one heart and mind, rejoice in one Savior. Not a heart among them but feels drawn to Jesus as the only object of hope. Not a tongue among them but would tell you that "Christ is all." Sweet to them all is the thought of Christ's death for them on the cross. Sweet is the thought of Christ's intercession for them at the right hand of God. Sweet is the thought of Christ's coming again to unite them to Himself in one glorified company forever. In fact, you might as well take away the sun out of heaven, as take away the name of Christ from believers. To the world there may seem little in His name. To believers it is full of comfort, hope, joy, rest, and peace. No wonder they are called "a family."

3. True Christians, above all, are called "a family"—because there is so strong a family likeness among them. They are all led by one Spirit, and are marked by the same general features of life, heart, taste, and character. Just as there is a general bodily resemblance among the brothers and sisters of family, so there is a general spiritual resemblance among all the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty. They all hate sin and love God. They all rest their hope of salvation on Christ, and have no confidence in themselves. They all endeavor to come out and be separate from the ways of the world, and to set their affections on things above. They all turn naturally to the same Bible as the only food of their souls, and the only sure guide in their pilgrimage toward heaven. They find it a "lamp to their feet, and a light to their path." (Psalm. 119:105.) They all go to the same throne of grace in prayer, and find it as needful to speak to God as to breathe. They all live by the same rule, the Word of God, and strive to conform their daily life to its precepts. They have all the same inward experience. Repentance, faith, hope, charity, humility, inward conflict, are things with which they are all more or less acquainted. No wonder they are called "a family."

Reader, this family likeness among true believers is a thing that deserves special attention. To my own mind it is one of the strongest indirect evidences of the truth of Christianity. It is one of the greatest proofs of the reality of the work of the Holy Spirit. Some true Christians live in civilized countries, and some in the midst of heathen lands. Some are highly educated, and some are unable to read a letter. Some are rich and some are poor. Some are Churchmen and some are Dissenters. Some are old and some are young. And yet, notwithstanding all this, there is a marvelous oneness of heart and character among them. Their joys and their sorrows, their love and their hatred, their likes and their dislikes, their tastes and their distastes, their hopes and their fears, are all most curiously alike. Let others think what they please, I see in all this the finger of God. His handiwork is always one and the same. No wonder that true

Christians are compared to "a family."

Take an converted Englishman and a converted Hindu, and let them suddenly meet for the first time. I will engage, if they can understand one another's language, they will soon find common ground between them, and feel at home. The one may have been brought up at school and college, and enjoyed every privilege of English civilization. The other may have been trained in the midst of gross heathenism, and accustomed to habits, ways, and manners as unlike the Englishman's as darkness compared to light. And yet now in half an hour they feel that they are friends! The Englishman finds that he has more in common with his Hindu brother than he has with many an old college companion or school-fellow! Who can account for this? How can it be explained? Nothing can account for it but the unity of the Spirit's teaching. It is "one touch" of grace, not nature, "that makes the whole world kin." God's people are in the highest sense "a family."

Reader, this is the family to which I wish to direct your attention this Christmas. This is the family to which I want you to belong. I ask you this day to consider it well, if you never considered it before. I have shown you the Father of the family, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. I have shown you the Head and Elder Brother of the family, the Lord Jesus Himself. I have shown you the *features* and *characteristics* of the family. Its members have all great general marks of resemblance. Once more I say, consider it well.

Outside this family, remember, there is no salvation. None but those who belong to it, according to the Bible, are in the way that leads to heaven. The salvation of our souls does not depend on union with one Church or separation from another. They are miserably deceived who think that it does, and will find it out to their cost one day, except they awake. No, reader, the life of our souls depends on something far more important! This is life eternal, to be a member of "the whole family in heaven and earth."

II. I will now pass on to the second thing which I promised to consider. **What is the present position of "the whole family in heaven and earth"?**

The family to which I am directing your attention this day is divided into two great parts. Each part has its own residence or dwelling-place. Part of the family is in heaven, and part is on earth. For the present the two parts are entirely separated from one another. But they form one body in the sight of God, though resident in two places: and their union is sure to come one day.

Two places, be it remembered, and two only, contain the family of God. The Bible tells us of no third habitation. There is no such thing as purgatory, whatever some Christians may think fit to say. There is no house of training or probation for those who are not true Christians when they die. Oh no! There are but two parts of the family—the part that is seen and the part that is unseen, the part that is in "heaven" and the part that is on "earth." The members of the family that are not in heaven are on earth, and those that are not on earth are in heaven. Two parts, and two only! Two places, and two only! Let this never be forgotten.

Some of God's family are **safe in heaven**. They are at rest in that place which the Lord Jesus expressly calls "Paradise." (Luke 23:43.) They have finished their course. They have fought their battle. They have done their appointed work. They have learned their lessons. They have carried their cross. They have passed through the waves of this troublesome world and reached the harbor. Little as we know about them we know that they are happy. They are no longer troubled by sin and temptation. They have said goodbye forever to poverty and anxiety, to pain and sickness, to sorrow and tears. They are with Christ Himself, who loved them and gave Himself for them, and in His company they must needs be happy. (Phil. 1:23.) They have nothing to fear in looking back to the past. They have nothing to dread in looking forward to things to come. Three things only are lacking to make their happiness complete. These three are the second advent of Christ in glory, the resurrection of their own bodies, and the gathering together of all believers. And of these three things they are sure.

Some of God's family are **still upon earth**. They are scattered to and fro in the midst of a wicked world, a few in one place and a few in another. All are more or less occupied in the same way, according to the measure of their grace. All are running a race, doing a work, warring a warfare, carrying a cross, striving against sin, resisting the devil, crucifying the flesh, struggling against the world, witnessing for Christ, mourning over their own hearts, hearing, reading, and praying, however feebly, for the life of their souls. Each is often disposed to think no cross so heavy as his own, no work so difficult, no heart so hard. But each and all hold on their way, a wonder to the ignorant world around them, and often a wonder to themselves.

But, reader, however divided God's family may be at present in dwelling-place and local habitation, it is still one family. Both parts of it are still one in character, one in possessions, and one in relation to God. The part in heaven has not so much superiority over the part on earth as at first sight may appear. The difference between the two is only one of degree.

1. Both parts of the family love the same Savior, and delight in the same perfect will of God. But the part on earth loves with much imperfection and infirmity, and lives by faith, not by sight. The part in heaven loves without weakness, or doubt, or distraction. It walks by sight, and not by faith, and sees what it once believed.

2. Both parts of the family are saints. But the saints on earth are often poor weary pilgrims, who find the "flesh lusting against the spirit and the spirit lusting against the flesh, so that they cannot do the things they would." (Gal. v.17.) They live in the midst of an evil world, and are often sick of themselves and of the sin they see around them. The saints in heaven, on the contrary, are delivered from the world, the flesh, and the devil, and enjoy a glorious liberty. They are called "the spirits of just men made perfect." (Heb. 12. 23.)

3. Both parts of the family are alike God's children. But the children in heaven have learned all their lessons, have finished their appointed tasks, have begun an eternal holiday. The children on earth are still at school. They are daily learning wisdom, though slowly and with much trouble, and often needing to be reminded of their past lessons by chastisement and the rod. Their holidays are yet to come.

4. Both parts of the family are alike God's soldiers. But the soldiers on earth are yet militant Their warfare is not accomplished. Their fight is not over.

They need every day to put on the whole armor of God. The soldiers in heaven are all triumphant. No enemy can hurt them now. No

fiery dart can reach them. Helmet and shield may both be laid aside. They may at last say to the sword of the Spirit, Rest and be still. They may at length sit down, and need not to watch and stand on guard.

5. Last, but not least—both parts of the family are alike safe and secure. Wonderful as this may sound, it is true! Christ cares as much for His members on earth as His members in heaven. You might as well think to pluck the stars out of heaven as to pluck one saint, however feeble, out of Christ's hand. Both parts of the family are alike secured by "an everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure." (2 Sam. 23. 5.) The members on earth, through the burden of the flesh and the dimness of their faith, may neither see, nor know, nor feel their own safety. But they are safe, though they may not see it. The whole family is "kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation." (1 Pet. 1. 5.) The members yet on the road are as secure as the members who have got home. Not one shall he found missing at the last day. The words of the Christian poet shall be found strictly true:

> "More *happy*—but not more *secure*,
> The glorified spirits in heaven!"

Reader, before I leave this part of my subject, I ask you to understand thoroughly the present position of God's family, and to form a just estimate of it. Learn not to measure its numbers or its privileges by what you see with your eyes. You see only a small body of believers in this present time. But you must not forget that a great company has got safe to heaven already, and that when all are assembled at the last day they will be "a multitude which no man can number." (Rev. 7:9.) You only see that part of the family which is struggling on earth. You must never forget that the greater part of the family has got home and is resting in Paradise. You see the militant part but not the triumphant. You see the part that is carrying the cross—but not the part which is safe at the other side of the river. The family of God is far more rich and glorious than you suppose. Believe me, it is no small thing to belong to the "whole family in heaven and earth."

III. I will now pass on to the last thing which I promised to consider. What are the future prospects of "the whole family" in heaven and earth?

The future prospects of a family! What a vast amount of uncertainty these words open up when we look at any family now in the world! How little we can tell of the things coming on any of us! What a mercy that we do not know the sorrows, and trials, and separations, through which our beloved children may have to pass, when we have left the world! It is a mercy that we do not know "what a day may bring forth," and a far greater mercy that we do not know what may happen in twenty years. (Proverbs 27:1.) Reader, foreknowledge of the future prospects of our belongings would spoil many a family gathering this Christmas, and fill the whole party with gloom.

Think how many a fine boy, who is now the delight of his parents, will by and by walk in the prodigal's footsteps, and never return home! Think how many a fair daughter, the joy of a mother's heart, will follow the bent of her self-will after a few years, and insist on some miserably mistaken marriage! Think how disease and pain will often lay low the loveliest of a family circle, and make her life a burden and weariness to herself if not to others! Think of the endless breaches and divisions arising out of money matters! Alas, there is many a lifelong quarrel about a few pounds, between those who once played together in the same nursery! Reader, think of these things! The "future prospects" of many a family which will meet together this Christmas are a solemn and serious subject. Hundreds, to say the least, are gathering together for the last time. When they part they will never meet again.

But, thank God, there is one great family whose prospects are very different. It is the family of which I am speaking in this tract, and commending to your attention. The future prospects of the family of God are not uncertain. They are good, and only good—happy, and only happy. Listen to me, and I will try to set them in order before you.

1. The members of God's family shall all be brought safe home one day! Here upon earth they may be scattered, tried, tossed with tempests, and bowed down with afflictions. But not one of them shall perish. (John x. 28.) The weakest lamb shall not be left to perish in the wilderness. The feeblest child shall not be missing when the muster-roll is brought out at the last day. In spite of the world, the flesh, and the devil, the whole family shall get home. "If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." (Romans 5:10.)

2. The members of God's family shall all have glorious bodies one day! When the Lord Jesus Christ comes the second time the dead saints shall all be raised and the living shall all be changed. They shall no longer have a vile mortal body, full of weaknesses and infirmities. They shall have a body like that of their risen Lord, without the slightest liability to sickness and pain. They shall no longer be clogged and hindered by an aching frame when they want to serve God. They shall be able to serve Him night and day without weariness, and to attend upon Him without distraction. The former things will have passed away. That word will be fulfilled, "I make all things new." (Rev. 21:5.)

3. The members of God's family shall all be gathered into one company one day! It matters nothing where they have lived or where they have died. They may have been separated from one another both by time and space. One may have lived in tents, with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and another traveled by railway in our own day. One may have laid his bones in an Australian desert, and another may have been buried in an English churchyard. It makes no difference. All shall be gathered together, from north and south, and east and west, and meet in one happy assembly, to part no more. The earthly partings of God's family are only for a few days. Their meeting is for eternity. It matters little where we live. It is a time of scattering now, and not of gathering. It matters little where we die. All graves are equally near to Paradise. But it does matter much whether we belong to God's family. If we do we are sure to meet again at last.

4. The members of God's family shall all be united in mind and judgement one day. They are not so now about many little things. About the things needful to salvation there is a marvelous unity among them. About many speculative points in religion, about forms of worship and Church government, they often sadly disagree. But there shall be no disagreement among them one day. Ephraim shall no longer vex Judah, nor Judah Ephraim. Churchmen shall no more quarrel with Dissenters, nor Dissenters with Churchmen. Partial knowledge and dim vision shall be at an end forever. Divisions and separations, misunderstandings and misconstructions, shall be buried and forgotten. As there shall only be one language, so there shall only be one opinion. At last, after

six thousand years of strife and jangling, perfect unity and harmony shall be found. A family shall at length be shown to angels and men in which all are of one mind.

5. The members of God's family shall all be perfected in holiness one day! They are not literally perfect now. Though born again, and renewed after the image of Christ, they offend and fall short in many things. (James 3:2.) None know it better than they do themselves. It is their grief and sorrow that they do not love God more heartily and serve Him more faithfully. But they shall be completely freed from all corruption one day. They shall rise again at Christ's second appearing without any of the infirmities which cleave to them in their lives. Not a single evil temper or corrupt inclination shall he found in them. They shall be presented by their Head to the Father, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing—perfectly holy and without blemish—fair as the moon and clear as the sun. (Ephes. 5:27; Cant. 5:10.) Grace, even now, is a beautiful thing, when it lives, and shines, and flourishes in the midst of imperfection. But how much more beautiful will grace appear when it is seen pure, unmixed, disentangled, and alone. And it shall be seen so when Christ comes to be glorified in His saints at the last day.

6. Last—but not least, the members of God's family shall all be eternally provided for one day! When the affairs of this sinful world are finally wound up and settled, there shall be an everlasting portion for all the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty. Not even the weakest of them shall be overlooked and forgotten. There shall be something for everyone, according to his measure. The smallest vessel of grace, as well as the greatest, shall be filled to the brim with glory, the precise nature of that glory and reward it would be folly to pretend to describe. It is a thing which eye has not seen, nor mind of man conceived. Enough for us to know that each member of God's family when he awakes up after His Master's likeness, shall be satisfied. (Psalm 17:15.) Enough, above all, to know that their joy, and glory, and reward shall be forever. What they receive in the day of the Lord they will never lose. The inheritance reserved for them, when they come of age, is "incorruptible, undefiled, and fades not away." (1 Pet. 1:4.)

Reader, these prospects of God's family are great realities. They are not vague shadowy talk, of man's invention. They are real true things, and will be seen as such before long. They deserve your serious consideration. Examine them well.

Look around the families of earth with which you are acquainted, the richest, the greatest, the noblest, the happiest. Where will you find one among them all which can show prospects to compare with those of which you have just heard. The earthly riches, in many a case, will be gone in a hundred years hence. The noble blood, in many a case, will not prevent some disgraceful deed staining the family name. The happiness in many a case, will be found hollow and seeming. Few, indeed, are the homes which have not a secret sorrow or "a skeleton in the closet." Whether for present possessions or future prospects, there is no family so well off as "the whole family in heaven and earth." Whether you look at what they have now, or will have hereafter, there is no family like the family of God.

Reader, my task is done. My tract is drawing to a close. It only remains to close it with a few words of practical application. Give me your attention for the last time. May God bless what I am going to say to the good of your soul!

(1) I ask you a plain question. Take it with you to the family gathering which you are going to join at Christmas. Take it with you, and amidst all your Christmas happiness make time for thinking about it. It is a simple question—but a solemn one—Do you yet belong to the family of God?

To the family of God, remember! This is the point of my question. It is no answer to say that you are a Protestant, or a Churchman, or a Dissenter. I want to hear of something more and better than that. I want you to have some soul-satisfying and soul-saving religion—a religion that will give you peace while you live, and hope when you die. To have such peace and hope you must be something more than a Protestant, or a Churchman, or a Dissenter. You must belong to "the family of God." Thousands around you do not belong to it, I can well believe. But that is no reason why you should not.

Reader, if you do not yet belong to God's family, I invite you this day to join it without delay. Open your eyes to see the value of your soul, the sinfulness of sin, the holiness of God, the danger of your present condition, the absolute necessity of a mighty change. Open your eyes to see these things, and repent this very day. Open your eyes to see the great Head of God's family, even Christ Jesus, waiting to save your soul. See how He has loved you, lived for you, died for you, risen again for you, and obtained complete redemption for you. See how He offers you free, full, immediate pardon, if you will believe in Him. Open your eyes to see these things. Seek Christ at once. Come and believe on Him, and commit your soul to His keeping this very day.

I know nothing of your family or past history. I know not where you are going to spend your Christmas, or what company you are going to be in. But I am bold to say, that if you join the family of God this Christmas it will be the best and happiest Christmas in your life.

(2) Reader, if you really belong to the whole family in heaven and earth, count up your privileges, and learn to be more thankful! Think what a mercy it is to have something which the world can neither give nor take away—something which is independent of sickness or poverty—something which is your own for evermore. The old family fireside will soon be cold and tenantless. The old family gatherings will soon be past and gone forever. The loving faces we now delight to gaze on are rapidly leaving us. The cheerful voices which now welcome us will soon be silent in the grave. But, thank God, if we belong to Christ's family there is a better gathering yet to come. Let us often think of it—and be thankful!

Those grey-haired old patriarchs, whose cheerfulness made their Christianity so beautiful, and who thought of everybody more than of themselves—those tender mothers, whose memory is still so fragrant to their children, and whose sun seemed to go down at noonday—those little infants who were like sunbeams in our households, and were taken away before they had known good or evil—we shall see them all again. They are not lost—but only gone before. All, all will meet us in the great home, when the last trumpet sounds and "the whole family" is gathered together. Reader, let us often think of this, and be thankful.

The family gathering of all God's people will make amends for all that their religion now costs them. A meeting where none are missing—a meeting where there are no gaps and empty places—a meeting where there are no tears—a meeting where there is no parting—such a meeting as this is worth a fight and a struggle. And such a meeting is yet to come to "the whole family in heaven and earth."

In the meantime let us strive to live worthy of the family to which we belong. Let us labour to do nothing that may cause our Father's house to be spoken against. Let us endeavor to make our Master's name beautiful by our temper, conduct and conversation. Let us love as brethren, and abhor all quarrels. Let us behave as if the honor of the family depended on our behavior.

So living, by the grace of God, we shall make our calling and election sure, both to ourselves and others. So living, we may hope to have an abundant entrance, and to enter harbor in full sail, whenever we change earth for heaven. So living, we shall recommend our Father's family to others, and perhaps, by God's blessing incline them to say, "We will go with you!"

Reader, I commend these Christmas thoughts to your attention; and, wishing you a happy Christmas in the best and highest sense!

I remain, your affectionate friend,
J. C. Ryle

Do You Believe?

by J. C. Ryle

"God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish—but have everlasting life." John 3:16

Look at the well-known text which heads this page. Its words are probably familiar to your ears. You have very likely heard them, or read them, or quoted them, a hundred times. But have you ever considered what a vast amount of divinity this text contains? No wonder that Luther called it "the Bible in miniature!" And have you ever considered what an immensely solemn question arises out of this text? The Lord Jesus says, "Whoever believes shall not perish." Now, reader, DO YOU BELIEVE?

Questions about religion are seldom popular. They frighten people. They oblige them to look within and to think. The insolvent tradesman does not like his books to be searched. The faithless steward does not like his accounts to be examined. And the unconverted professing Christian does not like to be asked *home*-questions about his soul.

But questions about religion are very useful. The Lord Jesus Christ asked many questions during His ministry on earth. The servant of Christ ought not to be ashamed to do likewise. Questions about things necessary to salvation—questions which probe the conscience, and bring men face to face with God—such questions often bring life and health to souls. I know few questions more important than the one before you today. DO YOU BELIEVE?

Reader, the question before you is no easy one to answer. Think not to thrust it aside by the off-hand answer, *"Of course I believe."* I tell you this day, that true belief is no such "matter of course" as you suppose. I tell you that myriads of Protestants and Roman Catholics are constantly saying on Sundays, "I believe," who know nothing whatever of believing. They cannot explain what they mean. They neither know *what*, nor in *whom*, they believe. They can give no account of their faith. Reader, a belief of this kind is utterly useless. It can neither satisfy, nor sanctify, nor save.

I invite you in all affection, to consider the question which heads this tract. I ask you to give me your attention while I try to place it before you in its full proportions. In order to see clearly the importance of "believing," you should ponder well the words of Christ to which I have already referred. It is by the unfolding of these words, that I shall hope to make you feel the weight of the question, "Do you believe?"

There are four things which I wish to show you, and to impress upon your mind.

I. God's *mind* towards the world—He "loved" it.

2. God's *gift* to the world—"He gave His only begotten Son."

3. The *only way* to obtain the benefit of God's gift—"Whoever believes on Him shall not perish."

4. The *marks* by which true belief may be known.

Reader, I invite you to follow me step by step through the four points I have just stated. Do not throw down this tract in anger or impatience—but read it to the end. One thing I desire in writing it, and that is, YOUR SALVATION.

I. Let us consider, in the first place—God's mind towards the world—He "loved" it.

The extent of the Father's love towards the world is a subject on which there is some difference of opinion. It is a subject on which I have long taken my side, and never hesitate to speak my mind. I believe that the Bible teaches us, that God's love extends to all mankind. "His tender mercies are over all His works" (Psalm 145:9). He did not love the Jews only—but the Gentiles also. He does not love His own elect only. He loves all the world.

But what **kind** of love is this with which the Father regards all mankind? It cannot be a love of delight, or else He would cease to be a perfect God. He is one who cannot bear that which is evil. Oh, no! The world-wide love of which Jesus speaks—is a love of kindness, pity, and compassion. Fallen as man is, and provoking as man's ways are, the heart of God is full of kindness towards him. While as a righteous Judge He hates sin, He is yet able in a *certain sense*—to love sinners! The length and breadth of His compassion are not to be measured by our feeble measures. We are not to suppose that He is such a one as ourselves. Righteous and holy and pure as God is, it is yet possible for God to love all mankind.

Think, reader, for a moment, how wonderful is this extent of God's love. Look at the state of mankind in every part of the earth, and

mark the amazing quantity of wickedness and ungodliness by which earth is defiled. Look at the millions of heathen worshiping stocks and stones, and living in a spiritual darkness "which may be felt." Look at the millions of Roman Catholics, burying the truth under man-made traditions, and giving the honor due to Christ to the church, the saints, and the priest. Look at the millions of Protestants who are content with a mere *formal* Christianity, and know nothing of Christian *believing* or Christian *living*—except the *name*. Look at the land in which we live at this very day, and mark the sins which abound even in a privileged nation like our own. Think how drunkenness, and immorality, and lying, and swearing, and pride, and covetousness, and infidelity—are crying aloud to God from one end of Great Britain to the other. And then remember that God loves *this* world! No wonder that we find it written that He is "merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth" (Exod. 34. 6). His compassions fail not. He is "not willing that any should perish—but that all should come to repentance." He "would have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." He "has no pleasure in the death of him who dies." (2 Peter 3. 9: 1 Tim. 2. 4: Ezek. 33. 11.) There lives not the man or woman on earth whom God regards with *absolute hatred* or complete indifference. His mercy is like all His other attributes. It passes knowledge. God loves the world.

Reader, there are divers and strange doctrines abroad in the present day about the love of God. It is a precious truth which Satan labors hard to obscure by misrepresentation and perversion. Grasp it firmly, and stand on your guard.

Beware of the common idea that God the Father is only an angry Being, whom sinful man can only regard with fear, and from whom he must flee to Christ for safety. Cast it aside as a baseless and unscriptural notion. Contend earnestly for all the attributes of God—for His holiness and His justice, as well as for His love. But never allow for one moment that there is any lack of love towards sinners in any Person in the Blessed Trinity. Oh, no! Such as the Father is—such is the Son, and such is the Holy Spirit. The Father loves, and the Son loves, and the Holy Spirit loves. When Christ came on earth, the kindness and love of God toward man appeared. (Titus 3:4.) The cross is the *effect* of the Father's love, and not the *cause*. Redemption is the result of the compassion of all three Persons in the Trinity. To place the Father and the Son in opposition one to another, is weak and crude theology. Christ died, not because God the Father hated—but because He loved the world.

Beware, again, of the common doctrine that God's love is limited and confined to His own elect, and that all the rest of mankind are passed by, neglected, and let alone. This also is a notion that will not bear examination by the light of Scripture. The father of a prodigal son can surely love and pity him, even when he is walking after his own lusts, and refusing to return home. The Maker of all things may surely love the work of His own hands with a love of *compassion*, even when rebellious against Him. Let us resist to the death, the unscriptural doctrine of *universal salvation*. It is *not* true that all mankind will be finally saved. But let us not fly into the extreme of denying God's universal *compassion*. It is true that God "loves the world." Let us maintain jealously the privileges of God's elect. It is true that they are loved with a *special* love, and will be loved to all eternity. But let us not exclude any man or woman from the pale of God's *kindness* and *compassion*. We have no right to pare down the meaning of words when Jesus says, "God loved the world." The heart of God is far wider than that of man. There is a *sense* in which the Father loves all mankind.

I hold firmly the doctrine of election—as one of the sheet anchors of my beliefs. I delight in the blessed truth that God has loved His own elect with an *everlasting* love, before the foundation of the world. But all this is beside the question before us. That question is, "How does God regard all mankind?" I reply unhesitatingly, that God loves them. God loves all the world with a love of *compassion*.

Reader, if you never took up the service of Christ in real earnest, and have the least desire to begin, take comfort in the truth now before you. Take comfort in the thought that God the Father is a God of infinite love and compassion. Do not hang back and hesitate, under the idea that God is an angry Being, who is unwilling to receive sinners, and slow to pardon. Remember this day that *love* is the Father's darling attribute. In Him there is perfect justice, perfect purity, perfect wisdom, perfect knowledge, infinite power. But, above all, never forget there is in the Father a perfect love and compassion. Draw near to Him with boldness, because Jesus has made a way for you. But draw near to Him also with boldness, because it is written that "He loved the world."

Reader, if you have taken up the service of God already, never be ashamed of *imitating* Him whom you serve. Be full of love and kindness to all men, and full of special love to those who believe. Let there be nothing narrow, limited, contracted, stingy, or sectarian in your love. Do not only love your family and your friends—love all mankind. Love your neighbors and your fellow countrymen. Love strangers and foreigners. Love heathen and Muhammadans. Love the worst of men with a *love of pity*. Love all the world. Lay aside all envy and malice—all selfishness and unkindness. To keep up such a spirit, is to be no better than an infidel. Let everything you do—be done with charity. Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and be not weary of doing them good, to your life's end. The world may sneer at such conduct and call it base and low-spirited. But this is the mind of Christ. This is the way to be like God! GOD LOVED THE WORLD.

2. The next thing I want you to consider is God's GIFT to the world. "He **gave** His only begotten Son."

The manner in which the truth before us is stated by our Lord Jesus Christ, demands special attention. It would be well for many who talk big swelling words about "the love of God" in the present day, if they would mark the way in which the Lord Jesus sets it before us.

The love of God towards the world is not a vague, abstract idea of mercy, which we are obliged to take on trust without any proof that it is true. It is a love which has been *manifested* by a mighty gift. It is a love which has been put before us in a plain, unmistakable, tangible form. God the Father was not content to sit in heaven, *idly pitying* His fallen creatures on earth. He has given the mightiest evidence of His love towards us by a gift of unspeakable value. He has "spared not His own Son—but delivered Him up for us all" (Romans 8:32). *He has so loved us—that He has given us Christ!* A higher proof of the Father's love could not have been given.

Again, it is *not* written that God so loved the world that He *resolved* to save it—but that He so loved it that He *gave* Christ. His love is not displayed at the expense of His holiness and justice. It flows down from heaven to earth through *one* particular channel. It is set before men in one special way. It is *only*—through Christ, *by* Christ, on *account of* Christ, and in inseparable connection with the *work* of Christ. Let us glory in God's love by all means. Let us proclaim to all the world that God is love. But let us carefully remember that we know little or nothing of God's love which can give us comfort, excepting in Jesus Christ. It is not written that God so loved the world that He will take all the world to heaven—but that He so loved it, that He has given His only begotten Son. He who ventures on God's love without reference to Christ—is building on a foundation of sand!

Who can estimate the value of God's gift, when He gave to the world His only begotten Son? It is something unspeakable and incomprehensible! It passes man's understanding. There are two which man has no arithmetic to compute, and no line to measure. One of these things is the extent of that man's loss—who loses his own soul. The other is the extent of God's gift—when He gave Christ to sinners. He gave no *created thing* for our redemption, though all the treasures of earth, and all the stars of heaven were at His disposal. He gave no *created being* to be our Redeemer, though angels, principalities and powers in heavenly places, were ready to do His will. Oh no! He gave us One who was nothing less than His own fellow, fully and truly God—His only begotten Son! He who thinks lightly of man's need and man's *sin*—would do well to consider man's *Savior!* Sin must indeed be exceeding sinful, when the Father must needs give His only Son to be the sinner's Friend and Savior!

Reader, have you ever considered *to what* the Father gave His only begotten Son? Was it to be received with gratitude and thankfulness by a lost and bankrupt world? Was it to reign in royal majesty on a restored earth, and put down every enemy under His feet? Was it to enter the world as a king, and to give laws to a willing and obedient people? No! The Father gave His Son to be *despised* and *rejected* by men, to be born of a poor woman, and live a life of poverty—to be hated, persecuted, slandered, and blasphemed—to be counted as a criminal, condemned as a transgressor, and die the death of a felon! Never was there such love as this! Never such condescension! The man among ourselves who cannot stoop much and suffer much in order to do good, knows nothing of the mind of Christ.

For what end and purpose did the Father give His only begotten Son? Was it only to supply an example of self-denial and self-sacrifice? No! It was for a far higher end and purpose than this. He gave Him to be a sacrifice for man's sin, and an atonement for man's transgression. He gave Him to be delivered for our offences, and to die for the ungodly. He gave Him to bear our iniquities, and to suffer for our sins—the just for the unjust. He gave Him to be made a curse for us—that we might be redeemed from the curse of the law. He gave Him who knew no sin—to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. He gave Him to be an atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only—but for the sins of the whole world. He gave Him to be a ransom for us, and to make satisfaction for our heavy debt to God by His own precious blood. He gave Him to be the Almighty Friend of sinners—to be their Surety and Substitute—to do for them what they never could have done for themselves—to suffer what they could never have suffered—and to pay what they could never have paid. All that Jesus did and suffered on earth was according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. The chief end for which He lived and died—was to provide eternal redemption for sinners.

Reader, beware of ever losing sight of the great **purpose** for which Christ was given by God the Father. Let not the false teaching of modern divinity, however plausible it may sound, tempt you to forsake the old paths. Hold fast the faith once delivered to the saints, that the *special object* for which Christ was given—was to die for sinners, and to make atonement for them by His sacrifice on the cross. Once give up this great doctrine, and there is little worth contending for in Christianity. If Christ did not really bear our sins on the tree as our Substitute, there is an *end* of all solid peace.

Beware, again, of holding narrow and confined views of the extent of Christ's redemption. Regard Him as given by God the Father to be the *common Savior* for all the world. See in Him the fountain for all sin and wickedness, to which every sinner may come boldly, drink and live. See in Him the brazen serpent set up in the midst of the camp, to which every sin-bitten soul may look and be healed. See in Him a healing medicine of matchless value, sufficient for the needs of all the world, and offered freely to all mankind. The way to heaven is narrow enough already, by reason of man's pride, hardness, sloth, listlessness, and unbelief. But take heed that you do not make that way more narrow than it really is.

I confess, boldly—that **I hold the doctrine of *particular* redemption**, in a certain sense, as strongly as any one. I believe that none are *effectually* redeemed, but God's elect. They and they alone, are set free from the guilt, and power, and consequences of sin. But I hold no less strongly, that Christ's work of atonement is *sufficient for all mankind*. There is a *sense* in which He has tasted death for *every* man, and has taken upon Him the *sin of the world*. I dare not pare down, and file away, what appear to me the plain statements of Scripture. I dare not shut a door which God seems, to my eyes, to have left open. I dare not tell any man on earth that Christ has done nothing for him, and that he has no warrant to apply boldly to Christ for salvation. I must abide by the statements of the Bible. Christ is God's gift to the *whole* world.

Reader, I ask you to observe what a *giving* religion, true Christianity is. *Gift*, *love*, and *free-grace* are the grand characteristics of the pure gospel. The Father loves the world—and gives His only begotten Son. The Son loves us—and gives Himself for us. The Father and the Son together—give the Holy Spirit to all who ask. All Three Persons in the Blessed Trinity give grace upon grace to those who believe. Never be ashamed of being a *giving* Christian, if you profess to have any hope in Christ. Give freely, liberally, and self-denyingly, according as you have power and opportunity. Let not your love consist in nothing more than *vague expressions* of kindness and compassion. Make proof of it by *actions*. Help forward the cause of Christ on earth—by money, influence, pains, and prayer. If God so loved you as to give His Son for your soul—you should count it a privilege, and not a burden, to give what you can to do good to men.

Reader, if God has given you His only begotten Son, beware of doubting His kindness and love in any *painful providence* of your daily life! Never allow yourself to think hard thoughts of God. Never suppose that He can give you anything which is not really for your good. Remember the words of Paul: "He who spared not His own Son—but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things" (Romans 8:32.) See in every sorrow and trouble of your earthly pilgrimage—the hand of Him who gave Christ to die for your sins. *That hand* can never smite you—except in love. He who gave you His only begotten Son, will never withhold anything from you that is *really* for your good. Lean back on this thought and be content. Say to yourself in the darkest hour of trial, "This also is ordered by Him who gave Christ to die for my sins. It cannot be wrong. It is done in love. It must be well."

3. The third thing I propose to consider, is the WAY in which man obtains the benefit of God's love and Christ's salvation. It is written that "whoever believes shall not perish."

Reader, the point before you is of the deepest importance. To bring it out clearly before your eyes is one great object of the tract you are now reading. God has loved the world. God has given His Son "to be the Savior of the world" (1 John 4:14). And yet we learn from Scripture that many people in the world never reach heaven! Here at any rate is *limitation*. Here the gate is strait and the way narrow. Some and some only out of mankind, obtain eternal benefit from Christ. Who then, and what, are they?

Christ and His benefits are only available to those who *believe*. This is a doctrine repeatedly laid down in Scripture, in plain and unmistakable language. Those who will not believe in Him have no part in Him. Without believing there is no salvation. It is vain to suppose that any will be saved—merely because Christ was incarnate—or because Christ is in heaven—or because they belong to Christ's church—or because they are baptized—or because they have received the Lord's supper. All this is entirely useless to any man—except he believes. Without faith on his part, all these things together, will not save his soul. We must have personal *faith* in Christ, personal *dealings* with Christ, personal *transactions* with Christ—or we are lost for evermore. It is utterly false and unscriptural to say that Christ is in *every* man. Christ no doubt is *for* everyone—but Christ is not *in* everyone. He dwells only in those hearts which have faith—and all, unhappily, have not faith. He who believes *not* in the Son of God is yet in his sins—and the wrath of God abides on him! "He who believes not," says our Lord Jesus Christ in words of fearful distinctness—"He who believes not—shall be damned!" (Mark 6:16; John 3:36).

But Christ and all His benefits are the property of any person who believes. Everyone who believes on the Son of God—is at once pardoned, forgiven, justified, counted righteous, reckoned innocent, and freed from all liability to condemnation! His sins, however many—are at once cleansed away by Christ's precious blood. His soul, however guilty—is at once clothed with Christ's perfect righteousness. It matters not what he may have been in time past. His sins may have been of the worst kind. His former character may be of the blackest description. But does he believe on the Son of God? This is the one question. If he does believe, he is justified from all things in the sight of God. It matters nothing that he can bring to Christ nothing to recommend him—no good works, no long-proved amendments, no unmistakable repentance and change of life. But does he this day, believe in Jesus Christ? This is the grand question! If he does—he is at once accepted. He is accounted righteous for Christ's sake.

But **what is this believing**, which is of such matchless importance? What is the nature of this faith, which gives a man such amazing privileges? This is an important question. I ask your attention to the answer. Here is a rock on which many make shipwreck. And yet there is nothing really mysterious and hard to understand about *saving belief*. The whole difficulty arises from man's pride and self-righteousness. It is the very simplicity of *justifying faith*, at which thousands stumble. They cannot understand it—because they will not stoop.

Believing on Christ is no *mere intellectual assent*—or belief of the mind. This is no more than the faith of devils! We may believe that there was a divine Person called Jesus Christ, who lived and died and rose again, eighteen hundred years ago—and yet never believe so as to be saved. Doubtless there must be *some* knowledge of the gospel, before we can believe. There is no true religion in ignorance. But knowledge alone is not saving faith.

Believing on Christ again is not *mere feeling* something about Christ. This is often no more than temporary excitement, which, like the early dew, soon passes away. We may be pricked in conscience, and feel drawings toward the Gospel like Herod and Felix. We may even tremble and weep, and show much affection for the truth and those that profess it. And yet all this time our *hearts* and wills may remain utterly unchanged and secretly chained down to the world. Doubtless there is no saving faith where there is no feeling. But feeling alone—is not true faith.

True belief in Christ is the unreserved trust of a heart convinced of sin—in Christ, as an all-sufficient Savior. It is the combined act of the whole man's *mind*, *conscience*, *heart*, and *will*. It is often so weak and feeble at first, that he who has it, cannot be persuaded that he has it. And yet, like life in the newborn infant, his belief may be real, genuine, saving, and true. The moment that the *conscience* is convinced of sin, and the *head* sees Christ to be the only One who can save, and the *heart* and *will* lay hold on the hand that Christ holds out—that moment there is saving faith. In that moment a man truly believes.

True belief in Christ is so immensely important, that the Holy Spirit has graciously used many figures in the Bible in describing it. The Lord God knows the slowness of man to comprehend spiritual things. He has therefore multiplied forms of expression, in order to set true faith fully before us. The man who cannot understand "believing" in one *form of words*, will perhaps understand it in another.

1. Believing is the soul's COMING to Christ. The Lord Jesus says, "He who *comes* to Me shall never hunger." "Come unto Me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (John 6:35; Matt. 11:28). *Christ is that Almighty Friend, Advocate, and Physician, to whom all sinners, needing help, are commanded to apply*. The believer comes to Him by faith—and is relieved.

2. Believing is the soul's RECEIVING Christ. Paul says, "You have *received* Christ Jesus the Lord" (Col. 2:6). Christ offers to come into man's heart with pardon, mercy, and grace, and to dwell there as its Peacemaker and King. He says, "I stand at the door and knock" (Rev. 3. 20). The believer hears His voice, opens the door, and admits Christ as his Teacher, Priest, and King.

3. Believing is the soul's BUILDING on Christ. Paul says, you are "*built up* in Him." "You are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets" (Col. 2:7; Ephes. 2:20). Christ is that sure cornerstone, that strong foundation, which alone can bear the weight of a sinful soul. The believer places his hopes for eternity on Him—and is safe. The earth may be shaken and dissolved—but he is built upon a rock, and will never be confounded.

4. Believing is the soul's PUTTING ON Christ. Paul says, "As many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have *put on* Christ" (Gal. 3:27). Christ is that pure white robe, which God has provided for all sinners who would enter heaven. The believer puts on this robe by faith—and is at once perfect, and free from any spot in God's sight.

5. Believing is the soul's LAYING HOLD on Christ. Paul says, "We have fled for refuge to *lay hold* on the hope set before us" (Heb. 6:18). Christ is that true *city of refuge*, to which the man fleeing from the avenger of blood runs, and in which he is safe. Christ is that *altar* which provided a sanctuary to him who laid hold on its horns. Christ is that *almighty hand of mercy*, which God holds out from heaven to lost and drowning sinners. The believer lays hold on this hand by faith, and is delivered from the pit of hell.

6. Believing is the soul's EATING Christ. The Lord Jesus says, "My flesh is *food* indeed. He who eats of this *bread* shall live forever" (John 6:55, 58). Christ is that divine *food* which God has provided for starving sinners. He is that divine *bread* which is at the same time—life, nourishment and medicine! The believer feeds on this bread of life by faith. His hunger is relieved. His soul is delivered from damnation!

7. Believing is the soul's DRINKING Christ. The Lord Jesus says, "My blood is *drink* indeed" (John 6:55). Christ is that fountain

of living water which God has opened for the use of all thirsty and sin-defiled sinners, proclaiming, "Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely!" (Rev. 22:17). The believer drinks of this living water—and his thirst is quenched.

8. Believing is the soul's COMMITTAL of itself to Christ. Paul says, "He is able to keep that which I have *committed* to Him against that day" (2 Tim. 1:12). Christ is the appointed keeper and guardian of His people. It is His office to preserve from sin, death, hell, and the devil--any who are committed to His charge. The believer places his soul in the hands of this Almighty treasure-keeper, and is insured against loss to all eternity. He trusts himself to Christ—and is safe.

9. Last—but not least, believing is the soul's LOOK to Christ. Paul describes the saints as "*looking* unto Jesus" (Heb. 12:2). The invitation of the Gospel is, "look unto Me—and be saved" (Isaiah 45:22). Christ is that brazen serpent which God has set up in the world, for the healing of all sin-bitten souls who desire to be cured. The believer looks to Him by faith--and receives life, health, and spiritual strength!

One common remark applies to all the nine expressions which I have just gone through. They all give us *the simplest idea of faith or believing*—that man can desire. No one of them implies the notion of anything *mysterious*, *great*, or *meritorious* in the act of belief. All represent it as something within reach of the weakest and feeblest sinner, and within the comprehension of the most ignorant and unlearned. Grant for a moment that a man says, that he *cannot understand* what faith in Christ is. Let him look at the nine expressions under which faith is described in Scripture, and tell me, if he can, that he cannot understand them. Surely he must allow that *coming* to Christ, *looking* to Christ, *committing* our souls to Christ, *laying hold* on Christ, are simple ideas. Then let him remember that coming, looking, and committing our souls to Christ, are, in other words, believing.

And now, reader, if you love peace of conscience in your religion, I entreat you to grasp firmly the great doctrine which I have tried to set before you—and never let it go. Hold fast the grand truth, that saving faith is nothing but simple trust in Christ, that faith alone justifies, and that the one thing needful in order to obtain an interest in Christ—is to believe. No doubt repentance, holiness, and love are excellent things. They will always accompany true faith. But in the matter of *justification*, they have nothing to do. In that matter, the one thing needful is to believe. No doubt, *belief* is not the only grace to be found in the heart of a true Christian. But only belief gives him a saving interest in Christ. Prize that doctrine as the peculiar treasure of Christianity. Once let it go, or add anything to it, and there is an end of inward peace.

Prize the doctrine for its **suitableness** to the needs of fallen man. It places salvation within reach of the lowest and vilest sinner—if he has but heart and will to receive it. It asks him not for works, righteousness, merit, goodness or worthiness. It *requires nothing* of him. It strips him of all excuses. It deprives him of all pretext for despair. His sins may have been as scarlet. But will he believe? Then there is hope!

Prize the doctrine for its glorious **simplicity**. It brings eternal life near to the poor, and ignorant, and unlearned. It does not ask a man for a long confession of doctrinal orthodoxy. It does not require a store of head knowledge, and an acquaintance with articles and creeds. Does the man, with all his ignorance, come to Christ as a sinner, and commit himself entirely to Him for salvation? Will he believe? If he will—there is hope.

Above all, prize the doctrine for the glorious breadth and **fullness** of its terms. It does not say "the elect" who believe, or "the rich" who believe, or "the moral" people who believe, or "the Churchman" who believes, or "the Dissenter" who believes—these, and these only shall be saved. Oh! no, it uses a word of far wider signification: It says, "**Whoever** believes, shall not perish." Whoever—whatever his past life, conduct, or character; whatever his name, rank, job, or country; whatever his denomination, and whatever place of worship he may have attended; whoever believes in Christ shall not perish!

Reader, this is the Gospel. I do not marvel that Paul wrote those words, "if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you—let him be accursed!" (Gal. 1:8).

4. The fourth and last thing which I propose to consider, is a point of great practical importance. I wish to show you the MARKS by which true belief in Christ may be discerned and known.

The faith or believing of which I have spoken, is a grace of such importance, that we may naturally expect to hear of many counterfeits of it. There is a *dead* faith as well as a *living* one. There is a faith of *devils* as well as a faith of God's *elect*. There is a faith which is *vain* and *useless*, as well as a faith which *justifies* and *saves*. How shall a man know whether he has true faith? How shall he find out whether he believes to the saving of his soul? The thing *may* be found out! The Ethiopian may be known by the color of his skin; and the leopard may be known by his spots. True faith may always be known by certain marks. These marks are laid down unmistakably in Scripture. Reader, let me endeavor to set these marks plainly before you. Look at them carefully—and test your own soul by what I am going to say.

1. He who truly believes in Christ—has inward PEACE and HOPE. It is written, "Being justified by faith, we have *peace* with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." "We which have believed do enter into *rest*" (Romans 5:1; Heb. 4:3). The believer's sins are pardoned, and his iniquities taken away. His conscience is no longer burdened with the load of unpardoned transgressions. He is reconciled to God, and is one of His friends. He can look forward to death, judgment, and eternity—without fear. The *sting of death* is taken away. When the great judgment of the last day is held, and the books are opened—there will be nothing laid to his charge. When eternity begins—he is provided for. He has a hope laid up in heaven, and a city which cannot be moved. He may not be fully sensible of all these privileges. His sense and view of them may *vary* greatly at different times—and be often *obscured* by doubts and fears. Like a child who is yet under age, though heir to a great fortune—he may not be fully aware of the value of his possessions. But with all his doubts and fears—he has a real, solid, true hope which will bear examination, and at his best moments, he will be able to say, "I feel a hope which makes me not ashamed." (Romans 5:5.)

2. He who truly believes in Christ—has a NEW HEART. It is written, "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature—old things are passed away; behold, all things have become new." "To as many as received Christ, He gave power to become sons of God, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man—but of God." "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ—is born of God" (2 Cor. 5:17; John 1:12, 18; 1 John 5:1.) A believer has no longer the same nature with which he was born. He is changed, renewed, and transformed after the image of his Lord and Savior. He who minds first the things of the flesh—has no saving

faith. True faith, and spiritual regeneration, are inseparable companions. An unconverted person is not a genuine believer!

3. He who truly believes in Christ—is a HOLY person in heart and life. It is written that God "purifies the heart by faith," and that Christians are "sanctified by faith." "Whoever has this hope in him, purifies himself." (Acts 15:9; 26:18; 1 John 3:3.). A believer loves what God loves, and hates what God hates. His heart's desire is to walk in the way of God's commandments, and to abstain from all manner of evil. His wish is to follow after the things which are just, and pure, and honest, and lovely, and of good report, and to cleanse himself from all filthiness of flesh and spirit. He falls far short of his aim, in many things. He finds his daily life a *constant fight* with indwelling corruption. But he fights on, and resolutely refuses to *serve* sin. Where there is no holiness, we may be sure there is no saving faith! An unholy man is not a genuine believer!

4. He who truly believes in Christ—works godly WORKS. It is written, that "faith *works* by love" (Gal. 5:6). True belief will never make a man idle, or allow him to sit still, contented with his own religion. It will stir him to do acts of love, kindness, and charity, according as he sees opportunity. It will constrain him to walk in the steps of his Master, who "went about doing good." In one way or another, it will make him work. The works that he does may attract *no notice* from the world. They may seem *trifling* and *insignificant* to many people. But they are not forgotten by Him who notices a cup of cold water given for His sake. Where there is no working love—there is no faith. A lazy, selfish professing Christian, has no right to regard himself as a *genuine* believer!

5. He who truly believes in Christ—overcomes the WORLD. It is written, that "whoever is born of God overcomes the world—and this is the victory which overcomes the world—even our faith" (1 John 5:4). A true believer is not ruled by the world's *standard* of right or wrong, of truth or error. He is independent of the world's *opinion*. He cares little for the world's praise. He is not moved by the world's *censure*. He does not seek for the world's *pleasures*. He is not ambitious of the world's *rewards*. He looks at things unseen. He sees an invisible Savior, a coming judgment, a crown of glory which never fades away. The sight of these objects, makes him think comparatively little of this present world. Where the world reigns in the heart, there is no genuine faith. A man who is habitually conformed to the world, has no title to the name of a true believer!

6. He who truly believes in Christ—has an inward TESTIMONY of his belief. It is written, that "he who believes on the Son of God, has the witness in himself" (1 John 5:10). The mark before us requires very delicate handling. The witness of the Spirit is unquestionably a very difficult subject. But I cannot shrink from declaring my own firm persuasion, that a true believer always has inward feelings peculiar to himself—feelings which are inseparably connected with his faith, and flow from it—feelings of which unbelievers know nothing at all. He has the spirit of adoption, by which he regards God as a reconciled Father, and looks up to Him without fear. He has the testimony of his *conscience*, sprinkled with Christ's blood, that, weak as he is, he rests on Christ. He has hopes, joys, fears, sorrows, consolations, expectations, of which he knew nothing before he believed. He has internal evidences which the world cannot understand—but which are better to him than all the books of evidence in existence. Feelings are, no doubt, very deceitful. But where there are no inward pious feelings—there is no faith. A man who knows nothing of an inward, spiritual, experimental religion, is not yet a genuine believer!

7. Last—but not least, He who truly believes in Christ—has a special regard in all his religion—to the person of CHRIST Himself. It is written, "Unto you that believe Christ is precious" (1 Peter 2:7). That text deserves especial notice. It does not say "Christianity" is precious, or the "Gospel" is precious, or "salvation" is precious—but Christ Himself. A true believer's religion, does not consist in mere intellectual assent to a certain set of propositions and doctrines. It is not a mere cold belief of a certain set of truths and facts concerning Christ. It consists in union, communion, and fellowship with an actual living Person, even Jesus the Son of God. It is a life of faith in Jesus, confidence in Jesus, leaning on Jesus, drawing out of the fullness of Jesus, speaking to Jesus, working for Jesus, loving Jesus, and looking for Jesus to come again. Such life may sound like enthusiasm to many. But where there is true faith, Christ will always be known and realized, as an actual living personal Friend. He who knows nothing of Christ as his own Priest, Physician, and Redeemer, knows nothing yet of genuine believing!

Reader, I place these seven marks of believing before you, and I ask you to consider them well. I do not say, that all believers have them equally. I do not say, that no one will be saved, who cannot discover all these marks in himself. I concede, freely, that many believers are so weak in faith, that they go doubting all their days, and make others doubt about them too. I simply say, that these are the marks to which a man should first direct his attention, if he would answer the mighty question, *Do you believe?*

Where the seven marks, of which I have just been speaking, are utterly lacking, I dare not tell a man that he is a true believer. He may be called a Christian, and attend a Christian church. He may have been baptized with Christian baptism, and be a member of a Christian church. But if he knows nothing of peace with God, conversion of heart, newness of life, victory over the world, I dare not pronounce him a believer. He is yet dead in trespasses and sins. Except he awakes to newness of life, he will perish everlastingly.

Show me a man who has about him the seven marks which I have described, and I feel a strong confidence about the state of his soul. He may be poor and needy in this world—but he is rich in the sight of God. He may be despised and sneered at by man—but he is honorable in the sight of the King of kings. He is traveling towards heaven! He has a mansion ready for him in the Father's house. He is cared for by Christ, while on earth. He will be owned by Christ before assembled worlds, in the life which is to come.

1. And now, reader, in drawing this tract to a conclusion, I return to the QUESTION with which I began. I press that question on your conscience. I ask you, in my Master's name, whether you yet know anything of the subject of it? I ask you, while these pages are yet before your eyes, to look my inquiry in the face. I ask you, *Do you believe?*

DO YOU BELIEVE? I think it impossible to overrate the immense importance of the question before you. Life or death, heaven or hell, blessing or cursing—all hinge and turn upon it. He who believes on Christ—is not condemned. He who believes not—shall be damned. If you believe—you are pardoned, justified, accepted in God's sight, and have a title to everlasting life. If you do not believe—you are perishing daily. Your sins are all upon your head, sinking you down to perdition. Every hour you are so much nearer to hell.

DO YOU BELIEVE? It matters nothing what *others* are doing. The question concerns yourself. The folly of other men is no excuse for yours. The loss of heaven will not be less bitter, because you lose it in company. Look at *home*. Think of your own soul.

DO YOU BELIEVE? It is no answer to say, that "you sometimes hope Christ died for you." The Scriptures never tell us to spend our

time in doubts and hesitation on that point. We never read of a single case of one who stood still on that ground. Salvation is never made to turn on the question, whether Christ died for a man or not. The turning-point is always set before us as *believing*.

DO YOU BELIEVE? This is the point to which all must come at last, if they would be saved. It will signify little, when we hang on the brink of the grave, what we have *professed*, and to what *denomination* we have belonged. All this will sink into nothing, in comparison with the question of this tract. All will be useless, if we have not believed.

DO YOU BELIEVE? This is the common mark of all saved souls. Episcopalians or Presbyterians, Baptists or Independents, Methodists or Plymouth Brethren, Churchmen or Dissenters, all meet on this common ground, if they are true men. On other matters they are often hopelessly disagreed. But in living by faith on Jesus Christ, they are all one.

DO YOU BELIEVE? What reason can you give for unbelief, that will bear examination? Life is short and uncertain. Death is sure. Judgment is inevitable. Sin is exceeding sinful. Hell is a dreadful reality. Christ alone can save you. There is no other name given under heaven, whereby you can be saved. If not saved, the blame will be on your own head. You will not believe! You will not come to Christ, that He may give you life!

Reader, take warning this day. You must either believe on Christ, or perish everlastingly. Rest not until you can give a satisfactory answer to the question before you. Never be satisfied, until you can say, *By the grace of God I do believe!*

2. I pass on from questions—to COUNSEL. I offer it to all who are convinced of sin, and dissatisfied with their own spiritual condition. I entreat you to come to Christ by faith without delay. I invite you this day to believe on Christ to the saving of your soul.

I will not let you put me off by the common objection, "We cannot believe—we must wait until God gives us faith." I grant most fully that saving faith, like true repentance, is the gift of God. I grant that we have no natural power of our own to believe on Christ, receive Christ, come to Christ, lay hold on Christ, and commit our soul to Christ. But I see faith and repentance laid down clearly in Scripture as *duties* which God requires at any man's hands. He "commanded all men to repent." "This is His commandment, That we should believe" (Acts 17:30: 1 John 3:23). And I see it laid down with no less clearness, that unbelief and impenitence are sins for which man will be held accountable, and that he who does not repent and believe, destroys his own soul. (Mark 16:16; Luke 13:3).

Will anyone tell me that it is right for a man to sit still in sin? Will any one say that a sinner on the road to hell ought to wait idly for some power to take him up and put him in the way of heaven? Will any one say that it is right for a man to continue quietly serving the devil, in open rebellion against God—and that he is to make no effort, no struggle, no attempt to turn towards Christ?

Let others say these things, if they will. I cannot say them. I can find no warrant for them in Scripture. I will not waste time in trying to explain what cannot be explained, and unravel what cannot be unraveled. I will not attempt to show *philosophically* in what way an unconverted man can look to Christ, or repent, or believe. But this I know, that it is my plain duty to bid every unbeliever to repent and believe. And this I know, that the man who will not take the invitation, will find at last that he has ruined his own soul!

Reader, trust Christ, look to Christ, cry to the Lord Jesus Christ—if you never yet believed—about your soul. If you have not the right feelings yet, ask Him to give you right feelings. If you dare not think that you have true faith yet, ask Him to give you faith. But in any case do not sit still. Do not idle away your soul into hell—in ignorant, unscriptural sloth. Do not live on in senseless inactivity—waiting for you know not what—expecting what you cannot explain—increasing your guilt every day—offending God by continuing in lazy unbelief—and hourly digging a grave in hell for your own soul. Arise and call upon Christ! Awake and cry to Jesus about your soul! Whatever difficulties there may be about believing, one thing at least is abundantly clear—no man ever perished and went to hell—from the foot of the cross. *If you can do nothing else, lie down at the foot of the cross!*

3. I finish all by a word of EXHORTATION to all believers into whose hands this tract may fall. I address them as fellow-pilgrims and companions in tribulation. I exhort them, if they love life, and have found any peace in believing, to pray daily for an increase of faith. Let your prayer be continually, "Lord, increase my faith."

True faith admits of many degrees. The *weakest* faith is enough to join the soul to Christ, and to secure salvation. A *trembling* hand may receive a healing medicine. The *feeblest infant* may be heir to the richest possessions. The least true faith gives a sinner a title to heaven, as surely as the strongest. But *little faith* can never give so much sensible comfort as *strong faith*. According to the degree of our faith will be the degree of our peace, our hope, our strength for duty, and our patience in trial. Surely we should pray continually, *"Increase our faith."*

Believing reader, would you have more faith? Do you find believing so pleasant, that you would like to believe more? Then take heed that you are diligent in the use of every means of grace—diligent in your private communion with God—diligent in your daily watchfulness over time, temper, and tongue—diligent in your private Bible reading—diligent in your own private prayers. It is vain to expect spiritual prosperity, when we are careless about these things. Let those who will, call it *over-precise* and *legal* to be particular about these things. I only reply, that there never was an eminent saint who neglected them.

Reader, would you have more faith? Then seek to become more acquainted with Jesus Christ. Study your blessed Savior more and more, and strive to know more of the length and breadth and height of His love. Study Him in all His offices, as the Priest, the Physician, the Redeemer, the Advocate, the Friend, the Teacher, the Shepherd of His believing people. Study Him as one who not only *died* for you—but is also *living* for you at the right hand of God; as one who not only shed His *blood* for you—but daily *intercedes* for you at the right hand of God; as one who is soon coming again for you, and will stand once more on this earth. The miner who is fully persuaded that the rope which draws him up from the pit will not break, is drawn up without anxiety and alarm. The believer who is thoroughly acquainted with the fullness of Jesus Christ, is the believer who travels from grace to glory with the greatest comfort and peace.

Reader, I commend these things to your careful attention.

HAVING THE SPIRIT

by J. C. Ryle

"Worldly people, who do not have the Spirit."
Jude 19

I take it for granted that every reader of this paper believes in the Holy Spirit. The number of people in this country who are infidels, deists, or Socinians, and openly deny the doctrine of the Trinity, is happily not very great. Most people have been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. There are few Churchmen, at any rate, who have not often heard the well-known words of our old Catechism, "I believe in God the Holy Spirit, who sanctifies me and all the elect people of God."

But, notwithstanding all this, it would be well for many if they would consider what they know of the Holy Spirit beyond His name. What experimental acquaintance have you with the Spirit's work? What has He done for you? What benefit have you received from Him? You can say of God the Father, "He made me and all the world." You can say of God the Son, "He died for me and all mankind." But can you say anything about the Holy Spirit? Can you say, with any degree of confidence, "He dwells in me, and sanctifies me"? In one word, Have you the Spirit? The text which heads this paper will tell you that there is such a thing as "not having the Spirit." This is the point which I press upon your attention.

I believe the point to be one of vital importance at all seasons. I hold it to be one of special importance in the present day. I consider that clear views about the work of the Holy Spirit are among the best preservatives against the many false doctrines which abound in our times. Allow me then, to lay before you a few things, which by God's blessing, may throw light on the subject of having the Spirit.

I. Let me explain the immense importance of "Having the Spirit."

II. Let me point out the great general principle by which alone the question can be tried, "Have you the Spirit?"

III. Let me describe the particular effects which the Spirit always produces on the souls in which He dwells.

I. Let me, in the first place, **explain the immense importance of having the Spirit.**

It is absolutely necessary to make this point clear. Unless you see this, I shall appear like one beating the air all through this paper. Once let your mind lay hold on this, and half the work I want to do is already done for your soul.

I can easily fancy some reader saying, I do not see the use of this question! Supposing I have not the Spirit, what is the mighty harm? I try to do my duty in this world—I attend my church regularly—I receive the Sacrament occasionally—I believe I am as good a Christian as my neighbors. I say my prayers—I trust God will pardon my sins for Christ's sake. I do not see why I should not reach heaven at last, without troubling myself with hard questions about the Spirit."

If these are your thoughts, I entreat you to give me your attention for a few minutes, while I try to supply you with reasons for thinking differently. Believe me, nothing less than your soul's salvation depends on "Having the Spirit." Life or death; heaven or hell; eternal happiness or eternal misery; are bound up with the subject of this paper.

(a) Remember, for one thing, **if you have not the Spirit, you have no part in Christ, and no title to heaven.**

The words of Paul are express and unmistakable, "If any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him." (Rom. 8:9.) The words of John are no less clear, "Hereby we know that He abides in us by the Spirit whom He has given us." (1 John 3:24.) The indwelling of God the Holy Spirit is the common mark of all true believers in Christ. It is the Shepherd's mark on the flock of the Lord Jesus, distinguishing them from the rest of the world. It is the goldsmith's stamp on the genuine sons of God, which separates them from the dross and mass of false professors. It is the King's own seal on those who are His peculiar people, proving them to be His own property. It is "the pledge" which the Redeemer gives to His believing disciples while they are in the body, as a token of the full and complete "redemption" yet to come in the resurrection morning. (Ephes. 1:14.) This is the case of all believers. They all have the Spirit.

Let it be distinctly understood that he who has not the Spirit has not Christ. He who has not Christ has no pardon of his sins—no peace with God—no title to heaven—no well-grounded hope of being saved. His religion is like the house built on the sand. It may look well in fine weather. It may satisfy him in the time of health and prosperity. But when the flood rises, and the wind blows—when sickness and trouble come up against him, it will fall and bury him under its ruins. He lives without a good hope, and without a good hope he dies. He will rise again only to be miserable. He will stand in the judgment only to be condemned; he will see saints and angels looking on, and remember he might have been among them—but too late; he will see lost myriads around him, and find they cannot comfort him—but too late. This will be the end of the man who thinks to reach heaven without the Spirit.

Settle these things down in your memory, and let them never be forgotten. Are they not worth remembering? No Holy Spirit in you—no part in Christ! No part in Christ—no forgiveness of sins! No forgiveness of sins—no peace with God! No peace with God—no title to heaven! No title to heaven—no admission into heaven! No admission into heaven—and what then? Yes—what then? You may well ask. Where will you flee? Which way will you turn? To what refuge will you run? There is none at all. There remains nothing but hell. Not admitted into heaven--you must sink at last into hell.

I ask every reader of this paper to mark well what I say. Perhaps it startles you—but may it not be good for you to be startled? Have I told you anything more than simple scriptural truth? Where is the defective link in the chain of reasoning you have heard? Where is the flaw in the argument? I believe in my conscience there is none. From not having the Spirit to being in hell, there is but a long flight of downward steps. Living without the Spirit, you are already on the top; dying without the Spirit, you will find your way to the bottom!

(b) Remember, for another thing, **if you have not the Spirit you have no holiness of heart, and no fitness for heaven.**

Heaven is the place to which all people hope to go after they die. It would be well for many if they considered calmly what kind of dwelling-place heaven is. It is the habitation of the King of kings, who is "of purer eyes than to behold iniquity," and it must needs be a holy place. It is a place into which Scripture tells us there shall enter in nothing "that defiles, neither whatever works abomination." (Rev. 21:27.) It is a place where there shall be nothing wicked, sinful, or sensual—nothing worldly, foolish, frivolous, or profane. There, let the covetous man remember, shall be no more money. There, let the pleasure seeker remember, shall be no more races, theaters, novel reading, or balls. There, let the drunkard and the gambler, remember, shall be no more strong drink, no more dice, no more betting, no more cards. The everlasting presence of God, saints, and angels—the perpetual doing of God's will—the complete absence of everything which God does not approve—these are the chief things which shall make up heaven. It shall be an eternal Sabbath day.

For this heaven we are all by nature utterly unfit. We have no capacity for enjoying its happiness. We have no taste for its blessings. We have no eye to see its beauty. We have no heart to feel its comforts. Instead of freedom, we would find it bondage. Instead of glorious liberty, we would find it constant constraint. Instead of a splendid palace, we would find it a gloomy prison. A fish on dry land, a sheep in the water, an eagle in a cage--would all feel more at ease and in their place than an unholy man in heaven. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." (Heb. 12:14.)

For this heaven it is the special office of the Holy Spirit to prepare men's souls. He alone can change the earthly heart, and purify the corrupt worldly affections of Adam's children. He alone can bring their minds into harmony with God, and tune them for the eternal company of saints, and angels, and Christ. He alone can make them love what God loves, and hate what God hates, and delight in God's presence. He alone can set the limbs of human nature, which were broken and dislocated by Adam's fall, and bring about a real unity between man's will and God's. And this He does for everyone that is saved. It is written of believers that they are "saved according to God's mercy," but it is "by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit." They are chosen unto salvation —but it is "through sanctification of the Spirit," as well as "belief of the truth." (Titus 3:5; 2 Thess. 2:13.)

Let this also be written down on the tablet of your memory. No entrance into heaven, without the Spirit first entering your heart upon earth! No admission into glory in the next life without previous sanctification in this life! No Holy Spirit in you in this world—then no heaven in the world to come! You would not be fit for it! You would not be ready for it! You would not like it! You would not enjoy it! There is much use made in the present day of the word "holy." Our ears are wearied with "holy church," and "holy baptism," and "holy days," and "holy water," and" holy services," and "holy priests." But one thing is a thousand times more important—and that is, to be made a really holy man by the Spirit. We must be made partakers of the Divine nature, while we are alive. We must "sow to the Spirit," if we would ever reap life everlasting. (2 Peter 1:4; Gal. 6:8.)

(c) Remember, for another thing, **if you have not the Spirit, you have no right to be considered a true Christian, and no will or power to become one.**

It requires little to make a 'Christian' according to the standard of the world. Only let a man be baptized and attend some place of worship, and the requirements of the world are satisfied. The man's belief may not be so intelligent as that of a Turk—he may be profoundly ignorant of the Bible. The man's practice may be no better than that of a heathen—many a respectable Hindu might put him to shame. But what of that? He is an Englishman! He has been baptized! He goes to church or chapel, and behaves decently when there! What more would you have? If you do not call him a Christian you are thought very uncharitable!

But it takes a great deal more than this to make a man a real Christian according to the standard of the Bible. It requires the cooperation of all the Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity. The election of God the Father—the blood and intercession of God the Son —the sanctification of God the Spirit—must all meet together on the soul that is to be saved. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit must unite to work the work of making any child of Adam a true Christian.

This is a deep subject, and one that must be handled with reverence. But where the Bible speaks with decision, there we may also speak with decision; and the words of the Bible have no meaning if the work of the Holy Spirit be not just as needful in order to make a man a true Christian, as the work of the Father or the work of the Son. "No man," we are told, "can say that Jesus is the Lord—but by the Holy Spirit." (1 Cor. 12:3.) True Christians, we are taught in Scripture, are "born of the Spirit." They live in the Spirit; they are led by the Spirit; by the Spirit they mortify the deeds of the body; by one Spirit they have access through Jesus unto the Father. Their graces are all the fruit of the Spirit; they are the temple of the Holy Spirit; they are a habitation of God through the Spirit; they walk after the Spirit; they are strengthened by the Spirit. Through the Spirit they wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. (John 3:6; Gal. 5:25; Rom. 8:13, 14; Eph. 2:18; Gal. 5:22; 1 Cor. 6:19; Eph. 2:22; Rom. 8:4; Eph. 3:16; Gal. 5:5.) These are plain Scriptural expressions. Who will dare to gainsay them?

The truth is that the deep corruption of human nature would make salvation impossible if it were not for the work of the Spirit. Without Him the Father's love and the Son's redemption are set before us in vain. The Spirit must reveal them, the Spirit must apply them, or else we are lost souls!

Nothing less than the power of Him who moved on the face of the waters in the day of creation can ever raise us from our low estate. He who said, "Let there be light, and there was light," must speak the word before anyone of us will ever rise to newness of life. He who came down on the day of Pentecost, must come down on our poor dead souls, before they will ever see the kingdom of God. Mercies and afflictions may move the surface of our hearts—but they alone will never reach the inner man. Sacraments, and services, and sermons may produce outward formality, and clothe us with a 'skin of religion'—but there will be no life. Ministers may make communicants, and fill churches with regular worshipers—the almighty power of the Holy Spirit alone can make true Christians, and fill heaven with glorified saints.

Let this also be written in your memory, and never forgotten. No Holy Spirit—no true Christianity! You must have the Spirit in you, as well as Christ for you--if you are ever to be saved. God must be your loving Father, Jesus must be your known Redeemer, the Holy Spirit must be your felt Sanctifier, or else it will be better for you never to have been born!

I press the subject on the serious consideration of all who read these pages. I trust I have said enough to show you that it is of vital importance to your soul to "have the Spirit." This is no abstruse and mysterious point of divinity; it is no nice question of which the

solution matters little one way or another. It is a subject in which is bound up the everlasting peace of your soul.

You may not like the tidings. You may call it wild enthusiasm, or fanaticism, or extravagance. I take my stand on the plain teaching of the Bible. I say that God must dwell in your heart by the Spirit on earth--or you will never dwell with God in heaven.

"Ah," you may say, "I do not know much about it. I trust God will be merciful. I hope I shall go to heaven after all." I answer, No man ever yet tasted of Christ's mercy who did not also receive of His Spirit. No man was ever justified who was not also sanctified. No man ever went to heaven who was not led there by the Spirit.

II. Let me, in the second place, **point out the great general rule and principle by which the question may be decided, whether we have the Spirit.**

I can quite understand that the idea of knowing whether we "have the Spirit" is disagreeable to many minds. I am not ignorant of the objections which Satan at once stirs up in the natural heart. "It is impossible to know it," says one person, "it is a deep thing, and beyond our reach." "It is too mysterious a thing to inquire into," says another, "we must be content to leave the subject in uncertainty." "It is wrong to pretend to know anything about it," says a third, "we were never meant to look into such questions. It is only fit for enthusiasts and fanatics to talk of having the Spirit." I hear such objections without being moved by them. I say that it can be known whether a man has the Spirit. It can be known—it may be known, it ought to be known. It needs no vision from heaven, no revelation from an angel to discern it; it needs nothing but calm inquiry by the light of God's Word. Let us enter upon that inquiry.

All people have not the Holy Spirit. I regard the doctrine of an 'inward spiritual light enjoyed by all mankind' as an unscriptural delusion. I believe the modern notion of universal salvation to be a baseless dream. Without controversy, God has not left Himself without a witness in the heart of fallen man. He has left in every mind sufficient knowledge of right and wrong to make all people responsible and accountable. He has given to every child of Adam a conscience—but He has not given to every child of Adam the Holy Spirit. A man may have good wishes like Balaam, do many things like Herod, be almost persuaded like Agrippa, and tremble like Felix, and yet be as utterly destitute of the grace of the Spirit as these people were. Paul tells us that before conversion people may "know God" in a certain sense, and have "thoughts accusing or excusing one another." But he also tells us that before conversion people are "without God" and "without Christ," have "no hope," and are "darkness" itself. (Rom. 1:21; 2:15; Eph. 2:12; 5:8.) The Lord Jesus Himself says of the Spirit, "The world sees Him not, neither knows Him—but you know Him, for He dwells with you, and shall be in you." (John 14:17.)

All members of Churches and baptized people have not the Spirit. I see no ground in Scripture for saying that every man who receives baptism receives the Holy Spirit, and that we ought to regard him as born of the Spirit. I dare not tell baptized people that they all have the Spirit, and that they only need "stir up the gift of God" within them in order to be saved. I see, on the contrary, that Jude speaks of members of the visible Church in his day as "not having the Spirit." Some of them probably had been baptized by the hands of apostles, and admitted into full communion with the professing Church. No matter! they "had not the Spirit." (Jude 19.)

It is vain to attempt to evade the power of this single expression. It teaches plainly that "having the Spirit "is not the lot of every man, and not the portion of every member of the visible Church of Christ. It shows the necessity of finding out some general rule and principle by which the presence of the Spirit in a man may be ascertained. He does not dwell in everyone. Baptism and churchmanship are no proofs of His presence. How, then, shall I know whether a man has the Spirit?

The presence of the Spirit in a man's soul can only be known by the effects which He produces. The fruits He causes to be brought forth in a man's heart and life, are the only evidence which can be depended on. A man's faith, a man's opinions, and a man's practice, are the witnesses we must examine, if we would find out whether a man has the Spirit. This is the rule of the Lord Jesus, "Every tree is known by his own fruit." (Luke 6:44.)

The effects which the Holy Spirit produces may always be seen. The man of the world may not understand them—they may in many cases be feeble and indistinct; but where the Spirit is, He will not be hidden. He is not idle when He enters the heart. He does not lie still. He does not sleep. He will make His presence known. He will shine out little by little through the windows of a man's daily habits and conversation, and manifest to the world that He is in him. A dormant, torpid, silent indwelling of the Spirit is a notion that pleases the minds of many. It is a notion for which I see no authority in the Word of God. I hold entirely with the Homily for Whit-Sunday, "As the tree is known by his fruit, so is also the Holy Spirit."

In whoever I see the effects and fruits of the Spirit, in that man I see one who has the Spirit. I believe it to be not only charitable to think so—but presumption to doubt it. I do not expect to behold the Holy Spirit with my bodily eyes, or to touch Him with my hands. But I need no angel to come down to show me where He dwells. I need no vision from heaven to tell me where I may find Him. Only show me a man in whom the fruits of the Spirit are to be seen, and I see one who "has the Spirit." I will not doubt the inward presence of the almighty cause, when I see the outward fact of an evident effect.

Can I see the **wind** on a stormy day? I cannot—but I can see the effects of its force and power. When I see the clouds driven before it, and the trees bending under it—when I hear it whistling through doors and windows, or howling round the chimney tops, I do not for a moment doubt its existence. I say, "There is a wind." Just so it is with the presence of the Spirit in the soul.

Can I see the **dew** of heaven as it falls on a summer evening? I cannot. It comes down softly and gently, noiseless and imperceptible. But when I go forth in the morning after a cloudless night, and see every leaf sparkling with moisture, and feel every blade of grass damp and wet, I say at once, "There has been a dew." Just so it is with the presence of the Spirit in the soul.

Can I see the hand of the sower when I walk through the corn fields in the month of July? I cannot. I see nothing but millions of ears rich with grain, and bending to the ground with ripeness—but do I suppose that harvest came by chance, and grew of itself? I suppose nothing of the kind. I know when I see those corn fields that the plough and the harrow were at work one day, and that a hand has been there which sowed the seed. Just so it is with the work of the Spirit in the soul.

Can I see the magnetism in the compass-needle? I cannot. It acts in a hidden mysterious way—but when I see that little piece of iron always turning to the north, I know at once that it is under the secret influence of magnetic power. Just so it is with the work of the

Spirit in the soul.

Can I see the mainspring of my watch when I look upon its face? I cannot. But when I see the fingers going round and telling the hours and minutes of the day in regular succession, I do not doubt the mainspring's existence. Just so it is with the work of the Spirit.

Can I see the steersman of the homeward-bound ship, when she first comes in sight, and her sails whiten on the horizon? I cannot. But when I stand on the pier-head and see that ship working her course over the sea towards the harbor's mouth, like a thing of life, I know well there is one at the helm who guides her movements. Just so it is with the work of the Spirit.

I charge all my readers to remember this. **Establish it as a settled principle in your mind, that if the Holy Spirit really is in a person, it will be seen in the effects He produces on his heart and life.**

Beware of supposing that a man may have the Spirit when there is no outward evidence of His presence in the soul. It is a dangerous and unscriptural delusion to think so. We must never lose sight of the broad principles laid down for us in Scripture, "If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth." "In this the children of God are manifest and the children of the devil—whoever does not righteousness is not of God." (1 John 1:6; 3:10.)

You have heard, I doubt not, of a wretched class of professing Christians called Antinomians. They are people who boast of having a saving interest in Christ, and say they are pardoned and forgiven, while at the same time they live in willful sin and open breach of God's commandments. I dare say that such people are miserably deceived. They are going down to hell with a lie in their right hand! The true believer in Christ is "dead to sin." Every person who has a real hope in Christ "purifies himself even as He is pure." (1 John 3:3.)

But I will tell you of a delusion quite as dangerous as that of the Antinomians, and far more specious. That delusion is—to flatter yourself you have the Spirit dwelling in your heart, while there are no fruits of the Spirit to be seen in your life. I firmly believe that this delusion is ruining thousands, as surely as Antinomianism. It is just as perilous to dishonor the Holy Spirit, as it is to dishonor Christ. It is just as offensive to God to pretend to an interest in the work of the Spirit, as it is to pretend to an interest in the work of Christ.

Once for all, I charge my readers to remember that the effects which the Spirit produces are the only trustworthy evidences of His presence. To talk of the Holy Spirit dwelling in you and yet being unseen in your life, is wild work indeed. It confounds the first principles of the Gospel—it confounds light and darkness—nature and grace—conversion and unconversion—faith and unbelief—the children of God and the children of the devil.

There is only one safe position in this matter. There is only one safe answer to the question, "How shall we decide who have the Spirit?" We must take our stand on the old principle laid down by our Lord Jesus Christ, "By their fruits you shall know them." (Matt. 7:20.) Where the Spirit is there will be fruit—he who has no fruit of the Spirit has not the Spirit. A work of the Spirit unfelt, unseen, inoperative, is a great delusion. Where the Spirit really is He will be felt, seen, and known.

III. Let me, in the last place, **describe the particular EFFECTS which the Spirit produces on the souls in which He dwells.**

I regard this part of the subject as the most important of all. Hitherto I have spoken generally of the great leading principles which must guide us in inquiring about the work of the Holy Spirit. I must now come closer, and speak of the special marks by which the presence of the Holy Spirit in any individual heart may be discerned. Happily, with the Bible for our light, these marks are not hard to find out.

Some things I wish to premise before entering fully into the subject. It is needful in order to clear the way.

(a) I grant freely that there are some deep MYSTERIES about the work of the Spirit. I cannot explain the manner of His coming into the heart. "The wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound thereof—but cannot tell whence it comes and where it goes—so is everyone that is born of the Spirit." (John 3:8.) I cannot explain why He comes into one heart and not into another—why He condescends to dwell in this man and not in that. I only know that so it is. He acts as a sovereign. To use the words of the Church Catechism, He sanctifies "the elect people of God." But I remember also that I cannot explain why I was born in Christian England, and not in heathen Africa. I am satisfied to believe that all God's work is well done. It is enough for me to be in the King's court, without being of the King's counsel.

(b) I grant freely that there are great DIVERSITIES in the operations by which the Spirit carries on His work in men's souls. There are differences in the **ages** at which He begins to enter the heart. With some He begins young, as with John the Baptist and Timothy—with some he begins old, as with Manasseh and Zaccheus. There are differences in the **feelings** which He first stirs up in the heart. He leads some by strong terror and alarm, like the jailer at Philippi. He leads some by gently opening their hearts to receive the truth, as Lydia. There are differences in the **time** occupied in effecting this complete change of character. With some the change is immediate and sudden, as it was with Saul when he journeyed to Damascus—with others it is gradual and slow, as it was with Nicodemus the Pharisee. There are differences in the **instruments** He uses in first awakening the soul from its natural death. With some He uses a sermon, with others the Bible, with others a tract, with others a friend's advice, with others a sickness or affliction, with others no one particular thing that can be distinctly traced. All this is most important to understand. To require all people to be squared down to one kind of experience is a most grievous mistake!

(c) I grant freely that the BEGINNINGS of the Spirit's work are often small and imperceptible. The seed from which the spiritual character is formed, is often very minute at first. The fountain-head of the spiritual life, like that of many a mighty river, is frequently at its outset, only a little trickling stream. The beginnings therefore of the Spirit's work in a soul are generally overlooked by the world—very frequently not duly valued and encouraged by other Christians—and almost without exception thoroughly misunderstood by the soul itself which is the subject of them. Let that never be forgotten. The man in whom the Spirit begins to work is never hardly aware, until long afterwards, that his state of mind about the time of his conversion arose from the entrance of the

Holy Spirit.

But still, after all these concessions and allowances, there are CERTAIN GREAT LEADING EFFECTS which the Spirit produces on the soul in which He dwells, which are always one and the same. Those who have the Spirit may be led at first by different paths—but they are always brought, sooner or later, into one and the same narrow way. Their leading opinions of Gospel truth are the same; their leading desires are the same; their general walk is the same. They may differ from one another widely in their natural character—but their spiritual character, in its main features, is always one. The Holy Spirit always produces one general kind of effects. Shades and varieties there are no doubt in the experience of those on whose hearts He works—but the general outline of their faith and life is always the same.

What then are these general effects which the Spirit always produces on those who really have Him? **What are the marks of His presence in the soul?** This is the question which now remains to be considered. Let us try to set down these marks in order.

1. All who have the Spirit are quickened by Him, and made spiritually ALIVE. He is called in Scripture, "The Spirit of life." (Rom. 8:3.) "It is the Spirit," says our Lord Jesus Christ, "who quickens." (John 6:63.) We are all by nature dead in trespasses and sins. We have neither feeling nor interest about true religion. We have neither faith, nor hope, nor fear, nor love. Our hearts are in a state of torpor; they are compared in Scripture to a stone. We may be alive about money, learning, politics, or pleasure—but we are dead towards God. All this is changed when the Spirit comes into the heart. He raises us from this state of death, and makes us new creatures. He awakens the conscience, and inclines the will towards God. He causes old things to pass away, and all things to become new. He gives us a new heart; He makes us put off the old man, and put on the new. He blows the trumpet in the ear of our slumbering faculties, and sends us forth to walk the world as if we were new beings.

How unlike was Lazarus shut up in the silent tomb, to Lazarus coming forth at our Lord's command! How unlike was Jairus' daughter lying cold on her bed amidst weeping friends, to Jairus' daughter rising and speaking to her mother as she was accustomed to do! Just as unlike is the man in whom the Spirit dwells to what he was before the Spirit came into him.

I appeal to every thinking reader. Can he whose heart is manifestly full of everything but God--hard, cold, and insensible—can he be said to "have the Spirit"? Judge for yourself.

2. All who have the Spirit are taught by Him. He is called in Scripture, "The Spirit of wisdom and revelation." (Eph. 1:17.) It was the promise of the Lord Jesus, "He shall teach you all things." "He shall guide you into all truth." (John 14:26; 16:13.) We are all by nature ignorant of spiritual truth. "The natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God—they are foolishness to him." (1 Cor. 2:14.) Our eyes are blinded. We neither know God, nor Christ, nor ourselves, nor the world, nor sin, nor heaven, nor hell, as we ought. We see everything under false colors. The Spirit alters entirely this state of things. He opens the eyes of our understandings. He illumines us; He calls us out of darkness into marvelous light. He takes away the veil. He shines into our hearts, and makes us see things as they really are! No wonder that all true Christians are so remarkably agreed upon the essentials of true religion! The reason is that they have all learned in one school—the school of the Holy Spirit. No wonder that true Christians can understand each other at once, and find common ground of fellowship! They have been taught the same language, by One whose lessons are never forgotten.

I appeal again to every thinking reader. Can he who is ignorant of the leading doctrines of the Gospel, and blind to his own state—can he be said to "have the Spirit "? Judge for yourself

3. All who have the Spirit are led by Him to the SCRIPTURES. This is the instrument by which He specially works on the soul. The Word is called "the sword of the Spirit." Those who are born again are said to be "born by the Word." (Eph. 6:17; 1 Peter 1:23.) All Scripture was written under His inspiration—He never teaches anything which is not therein written. He causes the man in whom He dwells to "delight in the law of the Lord." (Psalm 1:2.) Just as the infant desires the milk which nature has provided for it, and refuses all other food--so does the soul which has the Spirit desire the sincere milk of the Word. Just as the Israelites fed on the manna in the wilderness, so are the children of God taught by the Holy Spirit to feed on the contents of the Bible.

I appeal again to every thinking reader. Can he who never reads the Bible, or only reads it formally—can he be said to have the Spirit? Judge for yourself.

4. All who have the Spirit are convinced by Him of SIN. This is an especial office which the Lord Jesus promised He should fulfill. "When He has come, He shall reprove the world of sin." (John 16:8.) He alone can open a man's eyes to the real extent of his guilt and corruption before God. He always does this when He comes into the soul. He puts us in our right place. He shows us the vileness of our own hearts, and makes us cry with the publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" He pulls down those proud, self-righteous, self-justifying notions with which we are all born, and makes us feel as we ought to feel, "I am a sinful man, and I deserve to be in hell!" Ministers may alarm us for a little season; sickness may break the ice on our hearts; but the ice will soon freeze again if it is not thawed by the breath of the Spirit! Convictions not wrought by Him will pass away like the morning dew.

I appeal again to every thinking reader. Can the man who never feels the burden of his sins, and knows not what it is to be humbled by the thought of them—can he have the Spirit? Judge for yourself.

5. All who have the Spirit are led by Him to CHRIST for salvation. It is one special part of His office to "testify of Christ," to "take of the things of Christ, and to show them to us." (John 15:26; 16:15.) By nature we all think to work our own way to heaven—we fancy in our blindness that we can make our peace with God. From this miserable blindness the Spirit delivers us. He shows us that in ourselves we are lost and hopeless, and that Christ is the only door by which we can enter heaven and be saved. He teaches us that nothing but the blood of Jesus can atone for sin, and that through His mediation alone God can be just and the justifier of the ungodly. He reveals to us the exquisite fitness and suitableness to our souls of Christ's salvation. He unfolds to us the beauty of the glorious doctrine of justification by simple faith. He sheds abroad in our hearts that mighty love of God which is in Christ Jesus. Just as the dove flies to the well-known cleft of the rock, so does the soul of him who has the Spirit flee to Christ and rest on Him. (Rom. 5:5.)

I appeal again to every thinking reader. Can he who knows nothing of faith in Christ, be said to have the Spirit? Judge for yourself.

6. All who have the Spirit are by Him made HOLY. He is" the Spirit of holiness." (Rom. 1:4.) When He dwells in people, He makes them follow after love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, faith, patience, temperance." He makes it natural to them, through their new "Divine nature," to count all God's precepts concerning all things to be right, and to "hate every false way." (2 Pet 1:4; Ps. 119:128.) Sin is no more pleasant to them—it is their sorrow when tempted by it; it is their shame when they are overtaken by it. Their desire is to be free from it altogether. Their happiest times are when they are enabled to walk most closely with God—their saddest times are when they are furthest off from Him.

I appeal again to every thinking reader. Can those who do not even pretend to live strictly according to God's will, be said to have the Spirit? Judge for yourself.

7. All who have the Spirit are SPIRITUALLY MINDED. To use the words of the Apostle Paul, "those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit." (Rom. 8:5.) The general tone, tenor, and bias of their minds is in favor of spiritual things. They do not serve God by fits and starts—but habitually. They may be drawn aside by strong temptations; but the general tendency of their lives, ways, tastes, thoughts and habits, is spiritual. You see it in the way they spend their leisure time, the company they love to keep, and their conduct in their own homes. And all is the result of the spiritual nature implanted in them by the Holy Spirit. Just as the caterpillar when it becomes a butterfly can no longer be content to crawl on earth—but will fly upwards and use its wings, so will the affections of the man who has the Spirit be ever reaching upwards toward God.

I appeal again to every thinking reader. Can those whose minds are wholly intent on the things of this world be said to have the Spirit? Judge for yourself.

8. All who have the Spirit feel a CONFLICT within them, between the old nature and the new. The words of Paul are true, more or less, of all the children of God, "The flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh--so that you cannot do the things that you would." (Gal. 5:17.) They feel a holy principle within their bosoms, which makes them delight in the law of God—but they feel another principle within, striving hard for the mastery, and struggling to drag them downwards and backwards. Some feel this conflict more than others—but all who have the Spirit are acquainted with it; and it is a token for good. It is a proof that the 'strong man armed' no longer *reigns* within, as he once did, with undisputed sway. The presence of the Holy Spirit may be known by inward warfare as well as by inward peace. He who has been taught to rest and hope in Christ, will always be one who fights and wars with sin.

I appeal again to every thinking reader. Can he who knows nothing of inward conflict, and is a servant to sin, the world, and his own self-will, can he be said to have the Spirit? Judge for yourself.

9. All who have the Spirit LOVE others who have the Spirit. It is written of them by John, "We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren." (1 John 3:14.) The more they see of the Holy Spirit in anyone, the more dear he is to them. They regard him as a member of the same family, a child of the same Father, a subject of the same King, and a fellow-traveler with themselves in a foreign country towards the same father-land. It is the glory of the Spirit to bring back something of that brotherly love, which sin has so miserably chased out of the world. He makes people love one another for reasons which to the natural man are foolishness—for the sake of a common Savior, a common faith, a common service on earth, and the hope of a common home. He raises up friendships independent of blood, marriage, interest, business, or any worldly motive. He unites people by making them feel they are united to one great center, Jesus Christ.

I appeal again to every thinking reader. Can he who finds no pleasure in the company of spiritually-minded people, or even sneers at them as saints—can he be said to have the Spirit? Judge for yourself.

10. Finally, all who have the Spirit are taught by Him to PRAY. He is called in Scripture, "The Spirit of grace and supplication." (Zech. 12:10.) The elect of God are said to "cry to Him night and day." (Luke 18:7.) They cannot help it—their prayers may be poor, and weak, and wandering—but pray they must; something within them tells them they must speak with God and lay their needs before Him. Just as the infant will cry when it feels pain or hunger, because it is its nature, so will the new nature implanted by the Holy Spirit oblige a man to pray. He has the Spirit of adoption, and he must cry, "Abba, Father." (Gal. 4:6.)

Once more I appeal to every thinking reader. Can the man who never prays at all, or is content with saying a few formal heartless words, can he be said to have the Spirit? For the last time I say, Judge for yourself.

Such are the marks and signs by which I believe the presence of the Holy Spirit in a man may be discerned. I have set them down fairly as they appear to me to be laid before us in the Scriptures. I have endeavored to exaggerate nothing, and to keep back nothing. I believe there are no true Christians in whom these marks may not be found. Some of them, no doubt, stand out more prominently in some, and others in others. My own experience is distinct and decided—that I never saw a truly godly person, even of the poorest and humblest classes, in whom, on close observation, these marks might not be discovered.

I believe that marks such as these are the only safe evidence that we are traveling in the way that leads to everlasting life. I charge everyone who desires to make his calling and election sure, to see that these marks are his own. There are high-flying professors of religion, I know, who despise the mention of "marks," and call them "legal." I care nothing for their being called legal, so long as I am satisfied they are scriptural. And, with the Bible before me, I give my opinion confidently, that he who is without these marks is without the Spirit of God.

Show me a man who has these marks, and I acknowledge him as a child of God. He may be poor and lowly in this world; he may be vile in his own eyes, and often doubt of his own salvation. But he has that within him which only comes from above, and will never be destroyed, even the work of the Holy Spirit. God is his, Christ is his. His name is already written in the book of life, and before long heaven will be his own.

Show me a man in whom these marks are not to be found, and I dare not acknowledge him to be a true Christian. I dare not as an honest man; I dare not as a lover of his soul; I dare not as a reader of the Bible. He may make a great religious profession; he may be learned, high in the world, and moral in his life. It is all nothing if he has not the Holy Spirit. He is without God, without Christ,

without solid hope, and, unless he changes, will at length be without heaven.

And now let me finish this paper by a few **PRACTICAL REMARKS** which arise naturally out of the matter which it contains.

(a) Would you know, first of all, what is your own immediate duty? Listen, and I will tell you.

You ought to examine yourself calmly about the subject which I have been trying to set before you. You ought to ask yourself seriously how the doctrine of the Holy Spirit affects your soul. Look away, I beseech you, for a few minutes, to higher things than the things of earth, and more important things than the things of time. Bear with me, while I ask you a plain question. I ask it solemnly and affectionately, as one who desires your salvation—Have you the Spirit?

Remember, I do not ask whether you think all I have been saying is true, and right, and good. I ask whether you yourself, who are reading these lines--have within you the Holy Spirit?

Remember, I do not ask whether you believe that the Holy Spirit is given to the Church of Christ, and that all who belong to the Church are within reach of His operations. I ask whether you yourself have the Spirit in your own heart?

Remember, I do not ask whether you sometimes feel strivings of conscience, and good desires flitting about within you. I ask whether you have really experienced the quickening and reviving work of the Spirit upon your heart?

Remember, I do not ask you to tell me the day or month when the Spirit began His work in you. It is enough for me if fruit trees bear fruit, without inquiring the precise time when they were planted. But I do ask--Are you bringing forth any fruits of the Spirit?

Remember, I do not ask whether you are a perfect person, and never feel anything evil within. But I do ask, gravely and seriously, whether you have about your heart and life the marks of the Spirit?

I hope you will not tell me you do not know what the marks of the Spirit are. I have described them plainly. I now repeat them briefly, and press them on your attention.

1. The Spirit quickens men's hearts.

2. The Spirit teaches men's minds.

3. The Spirit leads to the Word.

4. The Spirit convinces of sin.

5. The Spirit draws to Christ.

6. The Spirit sanctifies.

7. The Spirit makes people spiritually minded.

8. The Spirit produces inward conflict.

9. The Spirit makes people love the brethren.

10. The Spirit teaches to pray.

These are the great marks of the Holy Spirit's presence. Put the question to your conscience like a man—Has the Spirit done anything of this kind for your soul?

I charge you not to let many days pass away without trying to answer my question. I summon you, as a faithful watchman knocking at the door of your heart, to bring the matter to an outcome. We live in an old, worn-out, sin-laden world. Who can tell what "a day may bring forth?" Who shall live to see another year? Have you the Spirit? (Prov. 27:1.)

(b) Would you know, in the next place, what is the grand defect of the Christianity of our times? Listen to me, and I will tell you.

The grand defect I speak of is simply this—that the Christianity of many people is not real Christianity at all. I know that such an opinion sounds hard and shockingly uncharitable. I cannot help that—I am satisfied that it is sadly true. I only want people's Christianity to be that of the Bible; but I doubt exceedingly, in many cases, whether it is so.

There are multitudes of English people, I believe, who go to church or chapel every Sunday merely as a form. Their fathers or mothers went, and so they go; it is the fashion of the country to go, and so they go; it is the custom to attend a religious service and hear a sermon, and so they go. But as to real, vital, saving religion--they neither know nor care anything about it. They can give no account of the distinctive doctrines of the Gospel. Justification, and regeneration, and sanctification, are "words and names" which they cannot explain. They may have a sort of vague idea that they ought to go to the Lord's Table, and may be able to say a few vague words about Christ—but they have no intelligent notion of the way of salvation. As to the Holy Spirit, they can scarcely say more about Him than that they have heard His name.

Now, if any reader of this paper is conscious that his religion is such as I have described, I will only warn him affectionately to remember that such religion is utterly useless. It will neither save, comfort, satisfy, nor sanctify his soul. And the plain advice I give him is to change it for something better without delay. Remember my words. It will not do at the last.

(c) Would you know, in the next place, one truth in the Gospel about which we need to be specially jealous in this day. Listen, and I will tell you.

The truth which I have in view is the truth about the work of the Holy Spirit. All truth no doubt is constantly assailed by Satan. I have no desire for a moment to exaggerate the office of the Spirit—and to exalt Him above the Sun and Center of the Gospel—Jesus Christ. But I do believe that, next to the priestly office of Christ, no truth in the present day is so frequently lost sight of, and so deceitfully assailed, as the work of the Spirit. Some injure it by ignorant neglect—their talk is all about Christ. They can tell you something about "the Savior;" but if you ask them about that inward work of the Spirit which all who really know the Savior experience, they have not a word to say.

Some injure the work of the Spirit by taking it all for granted. Membership of the Church, participation of the Sacraments, become their substitutes for conversion and spiritual regeneration. Some injure the work of the Spirit by confounding it with the action of natural conscience. According to this low view, none but the most hardened and degraded of mankind are destitute of the Holy Spirit. Against all such departures from the truth let us watch and be on our guard. Let us beware of leaving the proportion of Gospel statements. Let one of our chief watchwords in the present day be—**No salvation without the inward work of the Spirit! No inward work of the Holy Spirit unless it can be seen, felt, and known! No saving work of the Spirit which does not show itself in repentance towards God, and living faith towards Jesus Christ!**

(d) Would you know, in the next place, the reason why we, who are ministers of the Gospel, never despair of anyone who hears us so long as he lives? Listen, and I will tell you.

We never despair, because we believe the power of the Holy Spirit. We might well despair when we look at our own performances—we are often sick of ourselves! We might well despair when we look at some who belong to our congregations—they seem as hard and insensible as the nether mill-stone. But we remember the Holy Spirit, and what He has done; we remember the Holy Spirit, and consider that He has not changed. He can come down like fire and melt the hardest hearts! He can convert the worst man or woman among our hearers, and mold their whole character into a new shape. And so we preach on. We hope, because of the Holy Spirit. Oh, that our hearers would understand that the progress of true religion depends "not on might or on power," but on the Lord's Spirit! Oh, that many of them would learn to lean less on ministers, and to pray more for the Holy Spirit! Oh, that all would learn to expect less from schools, and tracts, and ecclesiastical machinery, and, while using all means diligently, would seek more earnestly for the outpouring of the Spirit. (Zech. 4:6.)

(e) Would you know, in the next place, what you ought to do, if your conscience tells you you have not the Spirit? Listen, and I will tell you.

If you have not the Spirit, you ought to go at once to the Lord Jesus Christ in prayer, and beseech Him to have mercy on you, and send you the Spirit. I have not the slightest sympathy with those who tell people to pray for the Holy Spirit in the first place, in order that they may go to Christ in the second place. I see no warrant of Scripture for saying so. I only see that if people feel they are needy, perishing sinners, they ought to apply first and foremost, straight and direct, to Jesus Christ. I see that He Himself says, "If any man thirsts, let him come unto Me and drink." (John 7:37.) I know that it is written, "He has received gifts for men, even for the rebellious, that the Lord God might dwell among them." (Psal. 68:18.) I know it is His special office to baptize with the Holy Spirit, and that "in Him all fullness dwells." I dare not pretend to be more systematic than the Bible. I believe that Christ is the meeting place between God and the soul, and my first advice to anyone who wants the Spirit must always be, "Go to Jesus, and tell your need to Him!" (Col. 1:19.)

Furthermore I would say, if you have not the Spirit, you must be diligent in attending those means of grace through which the Spirit works. You must regularly hear that Word, which is His sword; you must habitually attend those assemblies where His presence is promised. You must, in short, be found in the way of the Spirit, if you want the Spirit to do you good. Blind Bartimeus would never have received sight had he sat lazily at home, and not come forth to sit by the wayside. Zaccheus might never have seen Jesus and become a son of Abraham, if he had not run before and climbed up into the sycamore tree. The Spirit is a loving and good Spirit. But he who despises means of grace resists the Holy Spirit.

Remember these two things. I firmly believe that no man ever acted honestly and perseveringly on these two pieces of advice who did not, sooner or later, have the Spirit.

(f) Would you know, in the next place, what you ought to do, if you stand in doubt about your own state, and cannot tell whether you have the Spirit? Listen, and I will tell you.

If you stand in doubt whether you have the Spirit, you ought to examine calmly whether your doubts are well-founded. There are many true believers, I fear, who are destitute of any firm *assurance* as to their own state—doubting is their life. I ask such people to take their Bibles down, and consider quietly the grounds of their concerns. I ask them to consider whence came their sense of sin, however feeble—their love to Christ, however faint—their desire after holiness, however weak—their pleasure in the company of God's people—their inclination to prayer and the Word? Whence came these things, I say? Did they come from your own heart? Surely not! Sinful human nature bears no such fruit. Did they come from the devil? Surely not! Satan does not wage war against Satan. Whence then, I repeat, did these things come? I warn you to beware lest you grieve the Holy Spirit by doubting the truth of His operations. I tell you it is high time for you to reflect whether you have not been expecting an 'inward perfection' which you had no right to expect, and at the same time thanklessly undervaluing a real work which the Holy Spirit has actually wrought in your souls.

A great statesman once said that if a foreigner visited England, for the first time, with his eyes bandaged and his ears open—hearing everything—but seeing nothing—he might well suppose that England was on the road to ruin; so many are the murmurings of the English people. And yet if that same foreigner came to England with his ears stopped and his eyes open—seeing everything and hearing nothing—he would probably suppose that England was the most wealthy and flourishing country in the world, so many are the signs of prosperity that he would see.

I am often disposed to apply this remark to the case of doubting Christians. If I believed all they say of themselves I would certainly think they were in a bad state. But when I see them living as they do—hungering and thirsting after righteousness, poor in spirit, desiring holiness, loving the name of Christ, keeping up habits of Bible reading and prayer—when I see these things I cease to be afraid. I trust my eyes more than my ears. I see manifest marks of the Spirit's presence, and I only grieve that they should refuse to

see them themselves. I see the devil robbing them of their peace, by instilling these doubts into their minds, and I mourn that they should injure themselves by believing him. Some professors, without controversy, may well doubt whether they "have the Spirit," for they have no signs of grace about them. But many nurse up a habit of doubt in their minds for which they have no cause, and of which they ought to be ashamed.

(g) Would you know, last of all, what you ought to do, if you really have the Spirit. Listen to me, and I will tell you.

If you have the Spirit, seek to be "filled with the Spirit." (Ephes. 5:18.) Drink deep of the living waters. Do not be content with a little religion. Pray that the Spirit may fill every corner and chamber of your heart, and that not an inch of room may be left in it for the world and the devil.

If you have the Spirit, "grieve not the Spirit." (Ephes. 4:30.) It is easy for believers to weaken their sense of His presence, and deprive themselves of His comfort. Little sins not mortified, little bad habits of temper or of tongue not corrected, little compliances with the world, are all likely to offend the Holy Spirit. Oh, that believers would remember this! There is far more of "heaven on earth" to be enjoyed than many of them attain to—and why do they not attain to it? They do not watch sufficiently over their daily ways, and so the Spirit's work is damped and hindered. The Spirit must be a thoroughly sanctifying Spirit if He is to be a comforter to your soul.

If you have the Spirit, labor to bring forth all the fruits of the Spirit. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires." (Galatians 5:22-24)

Read over the list which the Apostle has drawn out, and see that not one of these fruits is neglected. Oh, that believers would seek for more "love," and more "joy!" Then would they do more good to all people; then would they feel happier themselves; then would they make religion more beautiful in the eyes of the world!

I commend the things that I have written to the serious attention of every reader of these pages. Let them not have been written in vain. Join with me in praying that the Spirit may be poured out from on high with more abundant influence than He has ever been yet. Pray that He may be poured out on all believers, at home and abroad, that they may be more united and more holy. Pray that He may be poured out on Jews, Muhammadans, and Heathen, that many of them may be converted.

Pray that He may be poured out on Roman Catholics, and especially in Italy and Ireland. Pray that He may be poured out on your own country, and that it may be spared the judgments it deserves. Pray that He may be poured out on all faithful ministers and missionaries, and that their numbers may be increased an hundredfold. Pray, above all, that He may be poured out, in abundant power, on your own soul--that if you know not the truth, you may be taught to know it, and that if you know it, you may know it better.

THE HOLY SPIRIT

by J. C. Ryle

"If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him." (Romans 8:9)

The subject of this paper is one of the deepest importance to our souls. That subject is the work of God the Holy Spirit. The solemn words of the text which heads this page demand the attention of all who believe the Scriptures to be the living voice of God. "If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him."

It is probable that most of those into whose hands this paper will fall, have been baptized. And in what name were you baptized? It was "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

It is probable that many readers of this paper are married people. And in what name were you pronounced man and wife together? Again, it was "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

It is not unlikely that many readers of this paper are members of the Church of England. And in what do you declare your belief every Sunday, when you repeat the Creed? You say that you "believe in God the Father, and in God the Son, and in God the Holy Spirit."

It is likely that many readers of this paper will be buried one day with the burial service of the Church of England. And what will be the last words pronounced over your coffin, before the mourners go home, and the grave closes over your head? They will be, "may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all." (2 Cor. 13:14.)

Now I ask every reader of this paper a plain question Do you know what you mean by these words, so often repeated—the Holy Spirit? What place has God the Holy Spirit in your religion? What do you know of His office, His work, His indwelling, His fellowship, and His power? This is the subject to which I ask your attention this day. I want you to consider seriously what you know about the work of God the Holy Spirit.

I believe that the times in which we live demand frequent and distinct testimonies upon this great subject. I believe that few truths of the Christian religion are so often obscured and spoiled by false doctrine as the truth about the Holy Spirit. I believe that there is no subject which an ignorant world is so ready to revile as "cant, fanaticism, and enthusiasm," as the subject of the work of the Holy Spirit. My heart's desire and prayer to God is, that about this subject I may write nothing but the "truth as it is in Jesus," and that I may write that truth in love. For convenience sake I shall divide my subject into four heads. I shall examine in order—

I. Firstly—the **importance** attached to the work of the Holy Spirit in Scripture.

II. Secondly—the **necessity** of the work of the Holy Spirit to man's salvation.

III. Thirdly—the **manner** in which the Holy Spirit works in man's heart.

IV. Lastly—the **marks** and **evidences** by which the presence of the Holy Spirit in a man's heart may be known.

I. The first point I propose to consider is **the IMPORTANCE attached to the work of the Holy Spirit in Scripture.** I find it hard to know where to begin and where to leave off, in handling this branch of my subject. It would be easy to fill up all this paper by quoting texts about it. So often is the Holy Spirit mentioned in the New Testament, that my difficulty is not so much the discovery of evidence, as the selection of texts. Eighteen times in the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans Paul speaks of God the Spirit. In fact the place which the Holy Spirit holds in the minds of most professing Christians bears no proportion to the place which He holds in the Word of God.

"There is a general omission in the saints of God, in their not giving the Holy Spirit that glory which is due to His person, and for His great work of salvation in us; insomuch that we have in our hearts almost lost this Third Person. We give daily in our thoughts, prayers, affections and speeches, an honor to the Father and the Son. But who directs the aims of his praise (more than in that general way of doxology we use to close our prayers with) unto God the Holy Spirit? He is a Person in the Godhead, equal with the Father and the Son. The work He does for us, in its kind, is as great as those of the Father or the Son. Therefore, by the equity of all law, a proportionate honor is due to Him."—Thomas Goodwin on the Work of the Holy Spirit. 1704.

I shall not spend much time in proving the divinity and personality of the Holy Spirit. They are points which are written in Scripture as with a sun-beam. I am utterly at a loss to understand how any honest-minded reader of the Bible can fail to see them. Above all, I am unable to comprehend how any unprejudiced reader of the Bible can regard the Spirit as nothing more than "an influence or principle." We find it written in the New Testament, that the Holy Spirit was "seen descending in a bodily shape." (Luke 3:22.) He commanded disciples to do acts, and lifted them through the air by His own power. (Acts 8:29-39.) He sent forth the first preachers to the Gentiles. (Acts 13:2.) He spoke to the Churches. (Rev. 2:7.) He makes intercession. (Rom. 8:26.) He searches all things, teaches all things, and guides into all truth. (1 Cor. 2:10; John 14:26; 16:13.) He is another Comforter distinct from Christ. (John 14:16.) He has personal affections ascribed to Him. (Isaiah 63:10; Ephes. 4:30; Rom. 15:30.) He has a mind, will, and power of His own. (Rom. 8:27; 1 Cor. 12:11; Rom. 15:13.) He has baptism administered in His name together with the Father and the Son. (Matt. 28:19.) And whoever shall blaspheme Him has never forgiveness, and is in danger of eternal damnation. (Mark 3:29.)

I make no comment on these passages. They speak for themselves. I only use the words of Ambrose Serle in saying, that "Two and two making four, does not appear more clear and conclusive than that the Holy Spirit is a living divine Agent, working with consciousness, will, and power. If people will not be persuaded by these testimonies, neither would they be persuaded though one rose from the dead."

I repeat that I will not spend time in dwelling on proofs of the Holy Spirit's divinity and personality. I will rather confine all I have to say on this branch of my subject to two general remarks.

For one thing, I ask my readers to remark carefully that **in every step of the grand work of man's redemption the Bible assigns a prominent place to God the Holy Spirit.**

What do you think of the **incarnation** of Christ? You know we cannot over-rate its importance. Well, it is written that when our Lord was conceived of the Virgin Mary, "the Holy Spirit came upon her, and the power of the Highest overshadowed her." (Luke 1:35.)

What do you think of the **earthly ministry** of our Lord Jesus Christ? You know that none ever did what He did, lived as He lived, and spoke as He spoke. Well, it is written that the Spirit "descended from heaven like a dove and abode upon Him,"—that "God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit,"—that "the Father gave not the Spirit by measure unto Him," and that He was "full of the Holy Spirit." (John 1:32; Acts 10:38; John 3:34; Luke 4:1.)

What do you think of the vicarious **sacrifice** of Christ on the cross? Its value is simply unspeakable. No wonder Paul says, "God forbid that I should boast, except in the cross." (Gal. 6:14.) Well, it is written, "Through the eternal Spirit He offered Himself without spot to God." (Heb. 9:14.)

What do you think of the **resurrection** of Christ? It was the seal and top-stone of all His work. He was "raised again for our justification." (Rom. 4:25.) Well, it is written that "He was put to death in the flesh—but quickened by the Spirit." (1 Pet. 3:18.)

What do you think of the **departure** of Christ from this world, when He ascended up into heaven? It was a tremendous trial to His disciples. They were left like a little orphan family, in the midst of cruel enemies. Well, what was the grand promise wherewith our Savior cheered them the night before He died? "I will ask the Father and He shall give you another Comforter, even the Spirit of truth" (John 14:16, 17.)

What do you think of the mission of the **apostles** to preach the Gospel? We Gentiles owe to it all our religious light and knowledge. Well, they were obliged to tarry at Jerusalem and "wait for the promise of the Father." They were unfit to go forth until they were "filled with the Holy Spirit," upon the day of Pentecost. (Acts 1:4; 2:4.)

What do you think of the **Scripture**, which is written for our learning? You know that our earth without a sun would be but a faint emblem of a world without a Bible. Well, we are informed that in writing that Scripture, "Holy men spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." (2 Pet. 1:21.) "The things which we speak," says Paul, we speak in the words which the Holy Spirit teaches." (1 Cor. 2:13.)

What do you think of the whole dispensation under which we Christians live? You know its privileges as far exceed those of the Jews as twilight is exceeded by noonday. Well, we are especially told that it is the "ministration of the Spirit." (2 Cor. 3:8.)

I would not for a moment have anyone suppose that I think Old Testament believers had not the Holy Spirit. On the contrary I hold that there has never been a whit of spiritual life among people, excepting from the Holy Spirit—and that the Holy Spirit made Abel and Noah what they were, no less really than He made Paul. All I mean to assert is, that the Holy Spirit is so much more fully revealed and largely poured out under the New Testament than under the Old, that the New Testament dispensation is emphatically and peculiarly called the "ministration of the Spirit." The difference between the two dispensations is only one of degree.

I place these texts before my readers as matter for private meditation. I pass on to the other general remark I promised to make.

I ask you then to remark carefully, that **whatever individual Christians have, are, and enjoy, in contradistinction to the worldly and unconverted, they owe to the agency of God the Holy Spirit**. By Him they are first called, quickened, and made alive. By Him they are born again, and made new creatures. By Him they are convinced of sin, guided into all truth and led to Christ. By Him they are sealed unto the day of redemption. He dwells in them as His living temples. He witnesses with their spirits—gives them the spirit of adoption, makes them to cry 'Abba Father', and makes intercession for them. By Him they are sanctified. By Him the love of God is shed abroad in their hearts. Through His power they abound in hope. Through Him they wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. Through Him they mortify the deeds of their bodies. After Him they walk. In Him they live. In a word, all that believers have from grace to glory—all that they are from the first moment they believe to the day they depart to be with Christ—all, all, all may be traced to the work of God the Holy Spirit. (John 6:63; 3:8; 16:9, 10; Eph. 4:30; 1 Cor. 6:19; Rom. 8:15, 16, 26; 2 Thess. 2:13; Rom. 5:5; 15:13; Gal. 5:5, 25; Rom. 8:1, 13.)

I may not tarry longer on this branch of my subject. I trust I have said enough to prove that I did not use words without meaning, when I spoke of the importance attached in Scripture to the work of the Spirit of God.

Before I pass on let me entreat all who read this paper to make sure that they hold sound doctrine concerning the work of the Holy Spirit. Give Him the honor due unto His name. Give Him in your religion the place and the dignity which Scripture assigns to Him. Settle it in your minds that the work of all three Persons in the blessed Trinity, is absolutely and equally needful to the salvation of every saved soul. The election of God the Father, and the atoning blood of God the Son, are the foundation stones of our faith. But from them must never be separated the applicatory work of God the Holy Spirit. The Father chooses. The Son mediates, absolves, justifies, and intercedes. The Holy Spirit applies the whole work to man's soul. Always together in Scripture, never separated in Scripture, let the offices of the three Persons in the Trinity never be wrenched asunder and disjoined in your Christianity. What God has so beautifully joined together let no man dare to put asunder.

"To give the Holy Spirit divine worship, if he be not God, is idolatry; and to withhold it, if He is God, is a heinous sin. To be well informed on this point, is of the greatst importance."—Hurrion on the Holy Spirit. 1731.

Accept a brotherly caution against all kinds of Christian teaching, falsely so called—which, either directly or indirectly, dishonor the work of the Holy Spirit. Beware of the error, on one side, which practically substitutes church membership and participation of the sacraments for the Spirit. Let no man make you believe that to be baptized and go to the Lord's Table, is any sure proof that you have the Spirit of Christ. Beware of the error, on the other side, which proudly substitutes the inward light, so called, and the scraps of conscience which remain in every man after the fall, for the saving grace of the Holy Spirit. Let no man make you believe that as a matter of course, since Christ died, all men and women have within them the Spirit of Christ. I touch on these points gently. I would be sorry to write one needless word of controversy. But I do say to everyone who prizes real Christianity in these days, "Be very jealous about the real work and office of the third Person of the Trinity." Test the spirits, to see whether they are of God. Prove diligently the many divers and strange doctrines which now infect the Church. And let the subject brought before you this day be one of your principal tests. Test every new doctrine of these latter times by two simple questions. Ask first, "Where is the Lamb?" And ask secondly, "Where is the Holy Spirit?"

"It is not the natural light of conscience, nor that improved by the Word, which converts any man to God, although this is the best spring of most men's practical part of religion. But it is faith, bringing in a new light into conscience, and so conscience lighting its candle-light at that sun which humbles for sin in another manner, and drives people to Christ, sanctifies, changes, and writes the law in the heart. And this you will find to be the state of difference between Augustine, and the Pelagians, and semi-Pelagians, which the whole stream and current of his writings against them hold forth. They would have had the light of natural conscience, and the seeds of natural virtues in people (as in philosophers), being improved by the revelation of the Word, to be that grace which the Scripture speaks of. He proclaims all their virtues, and their use of natural light to be sins, because deficient of holiness, and requires for us not only the revelation of the objects of faith, which else natural light could not find out—but a new light to see them withal."—Thomas Goodwin on the Work of the Holy Spirit. 1704.

II. The second point I propose to consider, is **the necessity of the work of the Holy Spirit to man's salvation.**

I invite special attention to this part of the subject. Let it be a settled thing in our minds that the matter we are considering in this paper is no mere speculative question in religion, about which it signifies little what we believe. On the contrary, it lies at the very foundation of all saving Christianity. Wrong about the Holy Spirit and His offices—and we are wrong to all eternity!

The necessity of the work of the Holy Spirit arises from the total corruption of human nature. We are all by nature "dead in sins." (Eph. 2:1.) However shrewd, and clever, and wise in the things of this world, we are all dead towards God. The eyes of our understanding are blinded. We see nothing aright. Our wills, affections, and inclinations are alienated from Him who made us. "The carnal mind is enmity against God." (Rom. 8:7.) We have naturally neither faith, nor fear, nor love, nor holiness. In short, left to ourselves, we would never be saved.

Without the Holy Spirit no man ever turns to God, repents, believes, and obeys. Intellectual training and secular education alone make no true Christians. Acquaintance with fine arts and science leads no one to heaven. Pictures and statues never brought one soul to God. The "tender strokes of art" never prepared any man or woman for the judgment day. They bind up no broken heart; they heal no wounded conscience. The Greeks had their Zeuxis and Parrhasius, their Phidias and Praxiteles, masters as great in their day as any in modern times; yet the Greeks knew nothing of the way of peace with God. They were sunk in gross idolatry, and bowed down to the works of their own hands. The most zealous efforts of ministers alone cannot make people Christians. The ablest scriptural reasoning has no effect on the mind; the most fervent pulpit eloquence will not move the heart; the naked truth alone will not lead the will. We who are ministers know this well by painful experience. We can show people the fountain of living waters—but we cannot make them drink. We see many a one sitting under our pulpits year after year, and hearing hundreds of sermons, full of Gospel truth, without the slightest result. We mark him year after year, unaffected and unmoved by every Scriptural argument—cold as the stones on which he treads as he enters our church, unmoved as the marble statue which adorns the tomb against the wall—dead as the old

dry oak of which his pew is made, feelingless as the painted glass in the windows, through which the sun shines on his head. We look at him with wonder and sorrow, and remember Xavier's words as he looked at China, "Oh, rock, rock! when will you open?" And we learn by such cases as these, that nothing will make a Christian but the introduction into the heart of a new nature, a new principle, and a Divine seed from above.

What is it then that man needs? We need to be "born again," and this new birth we must receive of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of life must quicken us. The Spirit must renew us. The Spirit must take away from us the heart of stone. The Spirit must put in us the heart of flesh. A new act of creation must take place. A new being must be called into existence. Without all this we cannot be saved. Here lies the main part of our need of the Holy Spirit. "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John 3:3.) No salvation without a new birth!

"This is that which gives unto the ministry of the Gospel both its glory and its efficacy. Take away the Spirit from the Gospel, and you render it a dead letter, and leave the New Testament of no more use unto Christians than the Old Testament is unto the Jews."—Owen on the Holy Spirit.

"In the power of the Holy Spirit rests all ability to know God and to please Him. It is He who purifies the mind by His secret working. He enlightens the mind to conceive worthy thoughts of Almighty God."—Homily

Let us dismiss from our minds forever the common idea that natural theology, moral persuasion, logical arguments, or even an exhibition of Gospel truth, are sufficient of themselves to turn a sinner from his sins, if once brought to bear upon him. It is a strong delusion. They will not do so. The heart of man is far harder than we fancy—the 'old Adam' is much more strong than we suppose. The ships which run aground at half-ebb, will never stir until the tide flows—the heart of man will never look to Christ, repent, and believe, until the Holy Spirit comes down upon it. Until that takes place, our inner nature is like the earth before the present order of creation began, "without form and void, and darkness covering the face of the deep." (Gen. 1:2.) The same power which said at the beginning, "Let there be light—and there was light," must work a creating work in us, or we shall never rise to newness of life.

But I have something more to say yet on this branch of my subject. The necessity of the work of the Spirit to man's salvation is a wide field, and I have yet another remark to make upon it.

I say then, that **without the work of the Holy Spirit no man could ever be fit to dwell with God in another world**. A fitness of some kind we must have. The mere pardon of our sins would be a worthless gift, unless accompanied by the gift of a new nature, a nature in harmony and in tune with that of God Himself. We need a **fitness** for heaven, as well as a **title** for heaven, and this fitness we must receive from the Holy Spirit. We must be made "partakers of the divine nature," by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. (2 Pet. 1:4.) The Spirit must sanctify our carnal natures, and make them love spiritual things. The Spirit must wean our affections from things below, and teach us to set them on things above. The Spirit must bend our stubborn wills, and teach them to be submissive to the will of God. The Spirit must write again the law of God on our inward man, and put His fear within us. The Spirit must transform us by the daily renewing of our minds, and implant in us the image of Him whose servants we profess to be. Here lies the other great part of our need of the Holy Spirit's work. We need sanctification no less than justification, "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." (Heb. 12:14.)

Once more I beseech my readers to dismiss from their minds the common idea, that men and women need nothing but pardon and absolution, in order to be prepared to meet God. It is a strong delusion, and one against which I desire with all my heart to place you on your guard. It is not enough, as many a poor ignorant Christian supposes on his death-bed, if God "pardons our sins and takes us to rest." I say again most emphatically, it is not enough. The love of sin must be taken from us, as well as the guilt of sin removed; the desire of pleasing God must be implanted in us, as well as the fear of God's judgment taken away; a love to holiness must be engrafted, as well as a dread of punishment removed. Heaven itself would be no heaven to us if we entered it without a new heart.

An eternal Sabbath and the society of saints and angels could give us no happiness in heaven, unless the love of Sabbaths and of holy company had been first shed abroad in our hearts upon earth. Whether people will hear or forbear, the man who enters heaven must have the sanctification of the Spirit, as well as the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. To use the words of Owen, "When God designed the great and glorious work of recovering fallen man and saving sinners, He appointed in His infinite wisdom two great means. The one was the giving of His Son for them; and the other was the giving of his Spirit unto them. And hereby was way made for the manifestation of the glory of the whole blessed Trinity."

"God the Father had but two grand gifts to bestow; and when once they were given, He had left then nothing that was great (comparatively) to give, for they contained all good in them. These two gifts were His Son, who was His promise in the Old Testament, and the Spirit, the promise of the New."—Thomas Goodwin on the Work of the Holy Spirit. 1704.

I trust I have said enough to show the absolute necessity of the work of the Holy Spirit to the salvation of man's soul. Man's utter inability to turn to God without the Spirit—man's utter unfitness for the joys of heaven, without the Spirit—are two great foundation stones in revealed religion, which ought to be always deeply rooted in a Christian's mind. Rightly understood, they will lead to one conclusion, "Without the Spirit, no salvation!"

Would you like to know the reason why we who preach the Gospel, preach so often about conversion? We do it because of the necessities of men's souls. We do it because we see plainly from the Word of God that nothing short of a thorough change of heart will ever meet the exigencies of your case. Your case is naturally desperate. Your danger is great. **You need not only the atonement of Jesus Christ—but the quickening, sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, to make you a true Christian, and deliver you from hell.** Gladly would I lead to heaven all who read this volume! My heart's desire and prayer to God is that you may be saved. But I know that none enter heaven without a heart to enjoy heaven, and this heart we must receive from God's Spirit.

Shall I tell you plainly the reason why some receive these truths so coldly, and are so little affected by them? You hear us listless and unconcerned. You think us extreme and extravagant in our statements. And why is this? It is just because you do not see or know the disease of your own soul. You are not aware of your own sinfulness and weakness. **Low and inadequate views of your spiritual disease, are sure to be accompanied by low and inadequate views of the remedy provided in the Gospel.** What shall I say to you? I can only say, "May the Lord awaken you! May the Lord have mercy on your soul!" The day may come when the scales

will fall from your eyes, when old things will pass away, and all things become new. And in that day I foretell and forewarn you confidently that the first truth you will grasp, next to the work of Christ, will be the absolute necessity of the work of the Holy Spirit.

III. The third thing I propose to consider, is **the MANNER in which the Holy Spirit works on the hearts of those who are saved.**

I approach this branch of my subject with much difficulty. I am very sensible that it is surrounded with difficulties, and involves many of the deepest things of God. But it is folly for mortal man to turn away from any truth in Christianity, merely because of difficulties. Better a thousand times receive with meekness what we cannot fully explain, and believe that what we know not now, we shall know hereafter. "Enough for us," says an old divine, "if we sit in God's court, without pretending to be of God's counsel."

In speaking of the manner of the Holy Spirit's working, I shall simply state certain great leading facts. They are facts attested alike by Scripture and experience. They are facts patent to the eyes of every candid and well instructed observer. They are facts which I believe it is impossible to gainsay.

(a) I say then that the Holy Spirit works on the heart of a man in a MYSTERIOUS manner. Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself tell us that in well-known words, "The wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound thereof—but cannot tell whence it comes and where it goes; so is everyone that is born of the Spirit." (John 3:8.) We cannot explain how and in what way the Almighty Spirit comes into man, and operates upon him; but neither also can we explain a thousand things which are continually taking place in the natural world. We cannot explain how our wills work daily on our bodily members, and make them walk, or move, or rest, at our discretion; yet no one ever thinks of disputing the fact. So ought it to be with the work of the Spirit. We ought to believe the fact, though we cannot explain the manner.

(b) I say furthermore, that the Holy Spirit works on the heart of a man in a SOVEREIGN manner. He comes to one and does not come to another. He often converts one in a family, while others are left alone. There were two thieves crucified with our Lord Jesus Christ on Calvary. They saw the same Savior dying, and heard the same words come from His lips. Yet only one repented and went to Paradise, while the other died in his sins. There were many Pharisees besides Saul, who had a hand in Stephen's murder; but Saul alone became an apostle. There were many slave captains in John Newton's time; yet none but he became a preacher of the Gospel. We cannot account for this. But neither can we account for China being a heathen country, and England a Christian land—we only know that so it is.

(c) I say furthermore, that the Holy Spirit always works on the heart of a man in such a manner as to be FELT. I do not for a moment say that the feelings which He produces are always understood by the person in whom they are produced. On the contrary, they are often a cause of anxiety, and conflict, and inward strife. All I maintain is that we have no warrant of Scripture for supposing that there is an indwelling of the Spirit which is not felt at all. Where He is, there will always be corresponding feelings.

(d) I say furthermore, that the Holy Spirit always works on the heart of a man in such a manner as to be SEEN IN THE MAN'S LIFE. I do not say that as soon as He comes into a man, that man becomes immediately an established Christian, a Christian in whose life and ways nothing but spirituality can be observed. But this I say—that **the Almighty Spirit is never present in a person's soul without producing some perceptible results in that person's conduct!** He never sleeps—He is never idle. We have no warrant of Scripture for talking of "dormant grace." "Whoever is born of God does not commit sin; for his seed remains in him." (1 John 3:9.) Where the Holy Spirit is, there will be something seen.

(e) I say furthermore, that the Holy Spirit always works on the heart of a man in an IRRESISTIBLE manner. I do not deny for a moment that there are sometimes spiritual strivings and workings of conscience in the minds of unconverted people, which finally come to nothing. But I say confidently, that when the Spirit really begins a work of conversion, He always carries that work to perfection. He effects miraculous changes. He turns the character upside down. He causes old things to pass away, and all things to become new. In a word, the Holy Spirit is Almighty. With Him nothing is impossible.

(f) I say, finally, under this head, that the Holy Spirit generally works on the heart of man through the USE OF MEANS. The Word of God, preached or read, is generally employed by Him as an instrument in the conversion of a soul. He applies that Word to the conscience—He brings that Word home to the mind. This is His general course of procedure. There are instances, undoubtedly, in which people are converted "without the Word." (1 Pet. 3:1.) But, as a general rule, God's truth is the sword of the Spirit. By it He teaches, and teaches nothing else but that which is written in the Word.

I commend these six points to the attention of all my readers. A right understanding of them supplies the best antidote to the many false and spurious doctrines by which Satan labors to darken the blessed work of the Spirit.

(a) Is there **a haughty, high-minded person** reading this paper, who in his pride of intellect rejects the work of the Holy Spirit, because of its mysteriousness and sovereignty? I tell you boldly that you must take up other ground than this before you dispute and deny our doctrine. Look to the heaven above you, and the earth beneath you, and deny, if you can, that there are mysteries there. Look to the map of the world you live in, and the marvelous difference between the privileges of one nation and another, and deny if you can, that there is sovereignty there. Go and learn to be consistent. Submit that proud mind of yours to plain undeniable facts. Be clothed with the humility that befits poor mortal man. Cast off that affectation of reasoning, under which you now try to smother your conscience. Dare to confess that the work of the Spirit may be mysterious and sovereign, and yet for all that is true.

(b) Is there **a Romanist, or semi-Romanist** reading this paper, who tries to persuade himself that all baptized people, and members of the Church, as a matter of course, have the Spirit? I tell you plainly that you are deceiving yourself, if you dream that the Spirit is in a man, when His presence cannot be seen. Go and learn this day that the presence of the Holy Spirit is to be tested, not by the name in the register, or the place in the family pew—but by the visible fruits in a man's life.

(c) Is there a **worldly man** reading this paper, who regards all claims to the indwelling of the Spirit as so much enthusiasm and fanaticism? I warn you also to take heed what you are about. No doubt there is plenty of hypocrisy and false profession in the Churches; no doubt there are thousands whose religious feelings are mere delusion. But counterfeit money is no proof that there is no such thing as good coin—**the abuse of a thing does not destroy the use of it.** The Bible tells us plainly that there are certain

hopes, and joys, and sorrows, and inward feelings, inseparable from the work of the Spirit of God. Go and learn this day that you have not received the Spirit, if His presence within you has not been felt.

(d) Is there an **excuse-making indolent person** reading this paper, who comforts himself with the thought that decided Christianity is an impossible thing, and that in a world like this he cannot serve Christ? Your excuses will not avail you. The power of the Holy Spirit is offered to you without money and without price. Go and learn this day that there is strength to be had for the asking. Through the Spirit, whom the Lord Jesus offers to give to you, all difficulties may be overcome.

(e) Is there a fanatic reading this paper, who fancies that it matters nothing whether a man stays at home or goes to church, and that if a man is to be saved, he will be saved in spite of himself? I tell you also this day, that you have much to learn. Go and learn that the Holy Spirit ordinarily works through the use of means of grace, and that it is by "hearing" that faith generally comes into the soul." (Rom. 10:17.)

I leave this branch of my subject here, and pass on. I leave it with a sorrowful conviction that nothing in religion so shows the blindness of natural man as his inability to receive the teaching of Scripture on the manner of the Holy Spirit's operations. To quote the saying of our Divine Master, "The world cannot receive Him." (John 14:17.) To use the words of Ambrose Serle, "This operation of the Spirit has been, and ever will be, an incomprehensible business to those who have not known it in themselves. Like Nicodemus, and other masters in Israel, they will reason and re-reason, until they puzzle and perplex themselves, by darkening counsel without knowledge; and when they cannot make out the matter, will give the strongest proof of all that they know nothing of it, by fretting and raving, and calling hard names, and saying, in short, that there is no such thing."

IV. I propose, in the last place, to consider the MARKS and EVIDENCES by which the presence of the Holy Spirit in a man's heart may be known.

Last as this point comes in order, it is anything but last in importance. In fact, it is that view of the Holy Spirit which demands the closest attention of every professing Christian. We have seen something of the place assigned to the Holy Spirit in the Bible. We have seen something of the absolute necessity of the Holy Spirit to a man's salvation. We have seen something of the manner of the Holy Spirit's operations. And now comes the mighty question, which ought to interest every reader, "How are we to know whether we are partakers of the Holy Spirit? By what marks may we find out whether we have the Spirit of Christ?"

I will begin by taking it for granted that the question I have just asked may be answered. Where is the use of our Bibles, if we cannot find out whether we are in the way to heaven? Let it be a settled principle in our Christianity, that a man may know whether or not he has the Holy Spirit. Let us dismiss from our minds once and forever the many unscriptural evidences of the Spirit's presence with which thousands content themselves. Reception of the sacraments and membership of the visible Church are no proofs whatever that we "have the Spirit of Christ." In short, I call it a shortcut to the grossest antinomianism to talk of a man having the Holy Spirit—so long as he serves sin and the world.

The presence of the Holy Spirit in a man's heart can only be known by the fruits and effects He produces. Mysterious and invisible to mortal eye as His operations are, they always lead to certain visible and tangible results. Just as you know the compass-needle to be magnetized by its turning to the north—just as you know there is life in a tree by its sap, buds, leaves and fruits—just as you know there is a steersman on board a ship by its keeping a steady regular course—just so you may know the Spirit to be in a man's heart by the influence He exercises over his thoughts, affections, opinions, habits, and life. I lay this down broadly and unhesitatingly. I find no safe ground to occupy excepting this. I see no safeguard against the wildest enthusiasm, excepting in this position. And I see it clearly marked out in our Lord Jesus Christ's words, "Every tree is known by his own fruit." (Luke 6:44.)

But what are the specific fruits by which the presence of the Spirit in the heart may be known? I find no difficulty in answering that question. The Holy Spirit always works after a certain definite pattern. Just as the bee always forms the cells of its comb in one regular hexagonal shape, so does the Spirit of God work on the heart of man with one uniform result. His work is the work of a master. The world may see no beauty in it—it is foolishness to the natural man. But "he who is spiritual discerns all things." (1 Cor. 2:15.) A well-instructed Christian knows well the fruits of the Spirit of God. Let me briefly set them before you in order. They are all clear and unmistakable, "plain to him who understands, and right to those who find knowledge." (Prov. 8:9.)

(1) Where the Holy Spirit is, there will always be **deep conviction of sin, and true repentance for it.** It is His special office to convince of sin. (John 16:8.) He shows the exceeding holiness of God. He teaches the exceeding corruption and infirmity of our nature. He strips us of our blind self-righteousness. He opens our eyes to our awful guilt, folly and danger. He fills the heart with sorrow, contrition, and abhorrence for sin, as the abominable thing which God hates. He who knows nothing of all this, and saunters carelessly through life, thoughtless about sin, and indifferent and unconcerned about his soul, is a dead man before God! He has not the Spirit of Christ.

(2) Where the Holy Spirit is, there will always be **lively faith in Jesus Christ, as the only Savior**. It is His special office to testify of Christ, to take of the things of Christ and show them to man. (John 16:15.) He leads the soul which feels its sin, to Jesus and the atonement made by His blood. He shows the soul that Christ has suffered for sin, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God. He points out to the sin-sick soul that we have only to receive Christ, believe in Christ, commit ourselves to Christ, and pardon, peace, and life eternal, are at once our own. He makes us see a beautiful fitness in Christ's finished work of redemption to meet our spiritual necessities. He makes us willing to disclaim all merit of our own and to venture all on Jesus, looking to nothing, resting on nothing, trusting in nothing but Christ, Christ, "delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification." (Rom. 4:25.) He who knows nothing of all this, and builds on any other foundation, is dead before God. He has not the Spirit of Christ.

(3) Where the Holy Spirit is, there will always be **holiness of life and conversation**. He is the Spirit of holiness. (Rom. 1:4.) He is the sanctifying Spirit. He takes away the hard, carnal, worldly heart of man, and puts in its place a tender, conscientious, spiritual heart, delighting in the Word of God. He makes a man turn his face towards God, and desire above all things to please Him, and turn his back on the fashion of this world, and no longer make that fashion his God. He sows in a man's heart the blessed seeds of "love, joy, meekness, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, temperance," and causes these seeds to spring up and bear pleasant fruit.

(Gal. 5:22.) He who lacks these things, and knows nothing of daily practical godliness, is dead before God. He has not the Spirit of Christ.

(4) Where the Holy Spirit is, there will always be **the habit of earnest private prayer**. He is the Spirit of grace and supplication. (Zech. 12:10.) He works in the heart as the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father. He makes a man feel that he must cry to God, and speak to God—feebly, falteringly, weakly, it may be—but cry he must about his soul. He makes it as natural to a man to pray as it is to an infant to breathe; with this one difference—that the infant breathes without an effort, and the new-born soul prays with much conflict and strife. He who knows nothing of real, living, fervent, private prayer, and is content with some old form, or with no prayer at all—is dead before God. He has not the Spirit of Christ.

(5) Finally, where the Holy Spirit is, there will always be **love and reverence for God's Word**. He makes the new-born soul desire the sincere milk of the Word, just as the infant desires its natural food. He makes it "delight in the law of the Lord." (1 Pet. 2:2; Psalm. 1:2.) He shows man a fullness, and depth, and wisdom, and sufficiency, in the Holy Scripture, which is utterly hid from a natural man's eyes. He draws him to the Word with an irresistible force, as the light and lantern, and manna, and sword, which are essential to a safe journey through this world. If the man cannot read He makes him love to hear—if he cannot hear He makes him love to meditate. But to the Word the Spirit always leads him. He who sees no special beauty in God's Bible, and takes no pleasure in reading, hearing, and understanding it, is dead before God. He has not the Spirit of Christ.

I place these five grand marks of the Spirit's presence before my readers, and confidently claim attention to them. I believe they will bear inspection. I am not afraid of their being searched, criticized, and cross-examined. Repentance toward God—faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ—holiness of heart and life—habits of real private prayer—love and reverence toward God's Word—these are the real proofs of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in a man's soul. Where He is, these marks will be seen. Where He is not, these marks will be lacking.

I grant freely that the leadings of the Spirit, in some minute details, are not always uniform. The paths over which He conducts souls, are not always precisely one and the same. The experience that true Christians pass through in their beginnings is often somewhat various. This only I maintain—that the main road into which the Spirit leads people, and the final results which He at length produces, are always alike. In all true Christians, the five great marks I have already mentioned will always be found.

I grant freely that **the degree and depth of the work of the Spirit in the heart may vary exceedingly**. There is weak faith and strong faith—weak love and strong love—a bright hope and a dim hope—a feeble obedience to Christ's will, and a close following of the Lord. This only I maintain—that the main outlines of religious character in all who have the Spirit, perfectly correspond. Life is life, whether strong or feeble. The infant in arms, though weak and dependent, is as real and true a representative of the great family of Adam as the strongest man alive.

Wherever you see these five great marks, you see a true Christian. Let that never be forgotten. I leave it to others to excommunicate and unchurch all who do not belong to their own denomination, and do not worship after their own particular fashion. I have no sympathy with such narrow-mindedness. Show me a man who repents, and believes in Christ crucified—who lives a holy life, and delights in his Bible and prayer—and I desire to regard him as a brother. I see in him a member of the universal Christian Church, out of which there is no salvation. I behold in him an heir of that crown of glory which is incorruptible and fades not away. If he has the Holy Spirit, he has Christ. If he has Christ, he has God. If he has God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit, all things are his. Who am I that I should turn my back on him, because we cannot see all things eye to eye?

Wherever these five great marks of the Spirit are lacking, we have just cause to be afraid about a man's soul. Visible Churches may endorse him, sacraments may be administered to him, forms of prayer may be read over him, ministers may charitably speak of him as "a brother," but all this does not alter the real state of things. The man is in the broad way that leads to destruction. Without the Spirit he is without Christ. Without Christ he is without God. Without God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit, he is in imminent danger. The Lord have mercy upon his soul!

I hasten on now towards a conclusion. I desire to wind up all I have been saying by a few words of direct **PERSONAL APPLICATION**.

(1) In the first place, let me ask a **QUESTION** of all who read this paper. It is a short and simple one, and grows naturally out of the subject. "Have you, or have you not, the Spirit of Christ?"

I am not afraid to ask this question. I will not be stopped by the commonplace remark that it is absurd, enthusiastic, unreasonable to ask such questions in the present day. I take my stand on a plain declaration or Scripture. I find an inspired Apostle saying, "If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him." I want to know what can be more reasonable than to press on your conscience the inquiry, "Have you the Spirit of Christ?"

I will not be stopped by the foolish observation, that no man can tell in this world whether or not he has the Spirit. No man can tell! Then what was the Bible given to us for? What is the use of the Scriptures if we cannot discover whether we are going to heaven or hell? The thing I ask can be known. The evidences of the Spirit's presence in the soul are simple, plain, and intelligible. No honest inquirer needs miss the way in this matter. You may find out whether you have the Holy Spirit.

I entreat you not to evade the question I have now asked. I beseech you to allow it to work inwardly in your heart. I charge you, as ever you would be saved, to give it an honest answer. Baptism, Church-membership, respectability, morality, outward correctness, are all excellent things. But do not be content with them. Go deeper—look further. "Have you received the Holy Spirit? Have you the Spirit of Christ?"

"It is a good sign of grace when a man is willing to search and examine himself, whether he is gracious or not. There is a certain instinct in a child of God, whereby be naturally desires to have the title of his legitimation tried; whereas a hypocrite dreads nothing more than to have his rottenness searched into."—Hopkins.

(2) Let me, in the next place, offer a solemn **WARNING** to all who feel in their own consciences that they have not the Spirit of

Christ. That warning is short and simple. If you have not the Spirit, you are not yet Christ's people—you are "none of His."

Think for a moment how much is involved in those few words, "none of His." You are not washed in Christ's blood! You are not clothed in His righteousness! You are not justified! You are not interceded for! Your sins are yet upon you! The devil claims you for his own! The pit opens her mouth for you! The torments of hell wait for you!

I have no desire to create needless fear. I only want sensible people to look calmly at things as they are. I only want one plain text of Scripture to be duly weighed. It is written, "If any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." And I say in the sight of such a text, if you die without the Spirit, it would have been better if you never had been born.

(3) Let me, in the next place, give an earnest **INVITATION** to all who feel that they have not the Spirit. That invitation is short and simple. Go and cry to God this day in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and pray for the Holy Spirit to be poured down on your soul. There is every possible encouragement to do this. There is warrant of Scripture for doing it. "Turn at my reproof, I will pour out my Spirit upon you. I will make known my words unto you." "If you, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him." (Prov. 1:23; Luke 11:13.) There is warrant in the experience of thousands for doing it. Thousands will rise at the last day, and testify that when they prayed they were heard, and when they sought grace, they found it. Above all, there is warrant in the person and character of our Lord Jesus Christ. He waits to be gracious. He invites sinners to come to Him. He rejects none that come. He gives "power to all who receive Him by faith and come to Him, to become the sons of God." (John 1:12.)

Go then to Jesus, as a needy, wanting, humble, contrite sinner, and you shall not go in vain. Cry to Him mightily about your soul, and you shall not cry to no purpose. Confess to Him your need, and guilt, and fear, and danger, and He will not despise you. Ask, and you shall receive. Seek, and you shall find. Knock, and it shall be opened to you. I testify to the chief of sinners this day, that there is enough in Christ, and to spare, for your soul. Come, come—come, this very day. Come to Christ!

(4) Let me, in the last place, give a parting word of **EXHORTATION** to all readers of this paper who have received the Spirit of Christ—to the penitent, the believing, the holy, the praying, the lovers of the Word of God. That exhortation shall consist of three simple things.

(a) For one thing, **be thankful for the Spirit**. Who has made you to differ? Whence came all these feeling in your heart, which thousands around you know not, and you yourself knew not at one time? To what do you owe that sense of sin, and that drawing towards Christ, and that hunger and thirst after righteousness, and that taste for the Bible and prayer, which, with all your doubts and infirmities, you find within your soul? Did these things come of nature? Oh, no! Did you learn these things in the schools of this world? Oh, no! no! They are all of grace. Grace sowed them, grace watered them, grace began them, grace has kept them up. Learn to be more thankful. Praise God more every day you live—praise Him more in private, praise Him more in public, praise Him in your own family, praise Him above all in your own heart. This is the way to be in tune for heaven. The anthem there will be, "What has God wrought?"

(b) For another thing, **be filled with the Spirit**. Seek to be more and more under His blessed influence. Strive to have every thought, and word, and action, and habit, brought under obedience to the leadings of the Holy Spirit. Grieve Him not by inconsistencies and conformity to the world. Quench Him not by trifling with little infirmities and small besetting sins. Seek rather to have Him ruling and reigning more completely over you every week that you live. Pray that you may yearly grow in grace, and in the knowledge of Christ. This is the way to do good to the world. An eminent Christian is a light-house—seen far and wide by others, and doing good to myriads, whom he never knows. This is the way to enjoy much inward comfort in this world, to have bright assurance in death, to leave broad evidences behind us, and at last to receive a great crown.

(c) Finally, **pray daily for a great outpouring of the Spirit on the Church and on the world**. This is the grand need of the day—it is the thing that we need far more than money, machinery, and men. The "company of preachers" in Christendom is far greater than it was in the days of Paul; but the actual spiritual work done in the earth, in proportion to the means used, is undoubtedly far less. We need more of the presence of the Holy Spirit—more in the pulpit, and more in the congregation—more in the pastoral visit, and more in the school. Where He is, there will be life, health, growth, and fruitfulness. Where He is not—all will be dead, tame, formal, sleepy, and cold. Then let everyone who desires to see an increase of pure and undefiled religion, pray daily for more of the presence of the Holy Spirit in every branch of the visible Church of Christ.

Prove All Things

by J. C. Ryle

"Prove all things—hold fast that which is good." 1 Thessalonians 5:21

You live in days when the text before your eyes is one of the first importance. The truths it contains are especially truths for the times. Give me your attention for a few minutes, and I will try to show you what I mean.

There were three great doctrines or principles which won the battle of the Protestant Reformation:

first, the sufficiency and supremacy of Holy Scripture

secondly, the right of private judgment

thirdly, justification by faith alone, without the deeds of the law.

These three principles were the keys of the whole controversy between the Reformers and the Church of Rome. Keep firm hold of

them when you argue with a Roman Catholic, and your position is unassailable; no weapon that the Church of Rome can forge against you shall prosper. Give up any one of them, and your cause is lost. Like Samson, with his hair shorn, your strength is gone. Like the Spartans, betrayed at Thermopylae, you are outflanked and surrounded. You cannot maintain your ground. Resistance is useless. Sooner or later you will have to lay down your arms, and surrender at discretion. Remember this.

The Roman Catholic controversy is upon you once more. You must put on the old armor, if you would not have your faith overthrown. The sufficiency of Holy Scripture, the right of private judgment, justification by faith alone—these are the three great principles to which you must always cling. Grasp them firmly, and never let them go. Reader, one of the three great principles to which I have referred appears to me to stand forth in the verse of Scripture which heads this tract—I mean the right of private judgment. I wish to say something to you about that principle.

The Holy Spirit, by the mouth of Paul, says to us, "Prove all things. Hold fast that which is good." In these words you have two great truths:

I. The right, duty, and necessity of private judgment. "Prove all things."

II. The duty and necessity of keeping firm hold upon truth. "Hold fast that which is good."

I propose to dwell a little on both these heads.

I. Let me speak first, of the right, duty, and necessity of private judgment. "Prove all things." When I say the right of private judgment, I mean that every individual Christian has a right to judge for himself by the Word of God, whether that which is put before him as religious truth, is God's truth, or is not. When I say the duty of private judgment, I mean that God requires every Christian man to use the right of which I have just spoken—to compare man's words and man's writings with God's revelation, and to make sure that he is not deluded and taken in by false teaching. And when I say the necessity of private judgment, I mean this—that it is absolutely needful for every Christian who loves his soul and would not be deceived, to exercise that right, and discharge that duty to which I have referred; seeing that experience shows that *the neglect of private judgment has always been the cause of immense evils in the Church of Christ!*

Now the Apostle Paul urges all these three points upon your notice when he uses those remarkable words, "Prove all things." I ask your particular attention to that expression. In every point of view it is most weighty and instructive. Here, you will remember, the Apostle Paul is writing to the Thessalonians, to a Church which he himself had founded. Here is an inspired Apostle writing to young inexperienced Christians, writing to the whole professing Church in a certain city, containing laity as well as clergy, writing too with especial reference to matters of doctrine and preaching, as we know by the verse preceding the text: "Despise not prophesyings." And yet mark what he says: "Prove all things." He does not say, "Whatever apostles, whatever evangelists, pastors and teachers, whatever your leaders, whatever your ministers tell you is truth--that you are to believe." No! he says, "Prove all things." He does not say, "Whatever the universal Church pronounces true--that you are to hold." No! he says, "Prove all things."

The principle laid down is this, "Prove all things by the Word of God. All ministers, all teaching, all preaching, all doctrines, all sermons, all writings, all opinions, all practices—prove all by the Word of God. Measure all by the measure of the Bible. Compare all with the standard of the Bible. Weigh all in the balances of the Bible. Examine all by the light of the Bible. Test all in the crucible of the Bible. That which can abide the fire of the Bible--you are to receive, hold, believe and obey. That which cannot abide the fire of the Bible--you are to reject, refuse, repudiate, and cast away."

Reader, this is private judgment. This is the right you are to exercise if you love your soul. You are not to believe things in religion merely because they are said by Popes or Cardinals—by Bishops or Priests—by Presbyters or Deacons—by Churches, Councils, or Synods—by Fathers, Puritans, or Reformers. You are not to argue, "Such and such things must be true--because these men say so." You are not to do so. You are to prove all things by the Word of God.

I know such doctrine sounds shocking in some men's ears. But I write it down advisedly, and believe it cannot be disproved. I want to encourage no man in ignorant presumption or ignorant contempt. I praise not the man who seldom reads his Bible, and yet sets himself up to pick holes in his minister's sermons. I praise not the man who knows nothing but a few texts in the New Testament, and yet undertakes to settle questions in divinity which have puzzled God's wisest children. But still I hold with Bilson, that "all hearers have both liberty to discern, and a charge to beware of seducers; and woe to them that do it not." And I say with Davenant, "We are not to believe all who undertake to teach in the Church, but must take care and weigh with serious examination, whether their doctrine is sound or not."

Reader, men may dislike the doctrine of private judgment, but there is no doubt that it is continually taught in the Word of God. This is the principle laid down in the eighth chapter of Isaiah, 19th verse. These words were written, remember, at a time when God was more immediately King over His Church, and had more direct communication with it than He has now. They were written at a time when there were men upon earth who had direct revelations from God. Yet what does Isaiah say? "To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light or truth in them." If this be not private judgment what is?

This again is the principle laid down by our Lord Jesus Christ in the Sermon on the Mount. Remember what He says: "Beware of false prophets which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. You shall know them by their fruit." (Matt. 7:15.) How is it possible that men shall know these false prophets, except they exercise their private judgment as to what their fruits are?

This is the practice you find commended in the Bereans, in the Acts of the Apostles. They did not take the Apostle Paul's word for granted, when he came to preach to them. You are told, that they searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so," and "therefore," it is said, "many of them believed." (Acts 17:11, 12.) What was this again but private judgment?

"The people of God are called to test the truth, to judge between true and false, between light and darkness. God has made them the promise of His Spirit, and has left unto them His Word. The Christians of Berea, when they heard the preaching of Paul, searched the Scriptures daily, to ascertain whether those things which Paul taught were true. So must you. Give heed to instruction--and yet do not

receive any teachings without proof and trial that they are the wholesome doctrine of the Word of God." Jewell.

This is the spirit of the advice given in 1 Cor. 10:15, "I speak as unto wise men—you judge what I say." Coloss. 2:18, "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit." 1 John 4:1, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God." 2 John 10, "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house." If these passages do not recommend the use of private judgment, I do not know what words mean. To my mind they seem to say to every individual Christian, "Prove all things."

Reader, whatever men may say against private judgment, you may be sure that it cannot be neglected without immense danger to your soul. You may not like it, but you never know what you may come to, if you refuse to use it! No man can say into what depths of false doctrine you may be drawn—if you will not do what God requires of you, and "Prove all things."

Suppose that, in fear of private judgment, you resolve to believe *whatever the Church believes*. Where is your security against error? The Church is not infallible. There was a time when almost the whole of Christendom embraced the Arian heresy, and did not acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ to be equal with the Father in all things. There was a time, before the reformation, when the darkness over the face of Europe was a darkness which might be felt. The General Councils of the Church are not infallible. When the whole Church is gathered together in a General Council, what says our Twenty-first Article? "They *may* err, and sometimes *have* erred, even in things pertaining unto God. Wherefore things ordained by them as necessary to salvation, have neither strength nor authority, unless it may be declared that they he taken out of Holy Scripture."

The particular branches of the Church are not infallible. Anyone of them may err. Many of them have fallen foully, or have been swept away. Where is the Church of Ephesus at this day? Where the Church of Sardis at the present time? Where the Church of Hippo in Africa? Where the Church of Carthage? They are all gone! Not a vestige of any of them is left! Will you then be content to err merely because the Church errs? Will your erring in company with the Church, remove your responsibility for your own soul? Oh, reader, it were surely a thousand times better for a man to stand alone and be saved—than to err in company with the Church, and be lost! It were better to prove all things, and go to heaven—than to say, "I dare not think for myself," and go to hell.

But suppose that, to cut matters short, you resolve to believe *whatever your minister believes*. Once more I ask, Where is your safety? Where is your security? Ministers are not infallible, any more than Churches. All of them have not the Spirit of God. The very best of them are only men. Call us Bishops, Priests, Deacons, or whatever names you please—we are all earthen vessels. I speak not merely of Popes, who have promulgated awful superstitions and led abominable lives. I would rather point to the very best of Protestants and say, "Beware of looking upon them as infallible—beware of thinking of any man (whoever that man may be)—that he cannot err!"

Luther held to consubstantiation—that was a mighty error. Zwingle, the Swiss Reformer, went on to battle, and died in the fight—that was a mighty error. Calvin, the Geneva Reformer, advised the burning of Servetus—that was a mighty error. Cranmer and Ridley urged the putting of Hooper into prison because of some trifling dispute about vestments—that was a mighty error. Whitgift persecuted the Puritans—that was a mighty error. Wesley and Toplady in the last century, quarreled fiercely about doctrine—that was a mighty error. All these things are warnings—if you will only take them. All say, "Cease from trusting in man." All show us that if a man's religion hangs on ministers, whoever they may be, and not on the Word of God—it hangs on a broken reed!

Never make ministers into *Popes*. Follow us so far as we follow Christ, but not a hair's breadth further. Believe whatever we can show you out of the Bible, but do not believe a single word more. Neglect the duty of private judgment, and you may find, to your cost, the truth of what Whitby says: The best of *overseers* do sometimes make *oversights*. You may live to experience the truth of what the Lord said to the Pharisees: When the blind lead the blind, both fall into the ditch!

Reader, be very sure no man is safe against error, unless he acts on Paul's injunction—unless he "proves all things" by the Word of God. Reader, I have said that it is impossible to overrate the evils that may arise from neglecting to exercise your private judgment. I will go further, and say that it is impossible to overrate the blessings which private judgment has conferred both on the world and on the Church. I ask you to remember that the greatest discoveries in *science* and in philosophy, have arisen from the use of private judgment. To this we owe the discovery of *Galileo*, that the earth went round the sun, and not the sun round the earth. To this we owe *Columbus'* discovery of the new continent of America. To this we owe *Harvey's* discovery of the circulation of the blood. To this we owe *Jenner's* discovery of vaccination. To this we owe the printing press, the steam engine, the power-loom, the electric telegraph, railways, and gas. For all these discoveries we are indebted to men who dared to think for themselves. They were not content with the beaten path of those who had gone before. They were not satisfied with taking for granted that what their fathers believed must be true. They made experiments for themselves. They brought old established theories to the proof; and found that they were worthless. They proclaimed new systems, and invited men to examine them, and test their truth. They bore storms of obloquy and ridicule unmoved. They heard the clamor of prejudiced lovers of old traditions without flinching. And they prospered and succeeded in what they did. We see it now. And we who live in the nineteenth century are reaping the fruit of their use of private judgment.

And, reader, as it has been in science—so also it has been in the history of the Christian religion. The martyrs who stood alone in their day, and shed that *blood* which has been the *seed* of Christ's Gospel throughout the world—the Reformers, who, one after another, rose up in their might to enter the lists with the Church of Rome—all did what they did, suffered what they suffered, proclaimed what they proclaimed, simply because they exercised their private judgment about what was Christ's truth.

Private judgment made the Waldenses, the Albigenses, and the Lollards, count not their lives dear to them, rather than believe the doctrines of the Church of Rome. Private judgment made Wyckliffe search the Bible in our land, denounce the Romish Friars, and all their impostures, translate the Scriptures into the vulgar tongue, and become "the morning star" of the Reformation. Private judgment made Luther examine Tetzel's abominable system of indulgences by the light of the Word. Private judgment led him on, step by step, from one thing to another, guided by the same light, until at length the gulf between him and Rome was a gulf that could not be passed, and the Pope's power in Germany was completely broken. Private judgment made our own English Reformers examine for themselves, and inquire for themselves, as to the true nature of that corrupt system under which they had been born and brought up. Private judgment made them cast off the abominations of Popery, and circulate the Bible among the laity. Private judgment made them brake the fetters of tradition, and dare to think for themselves. They refused to take for granted, Rome's pretensions and assertions. They examined them all by the Bible, and because they would not abide the examination, they broke with Rome

altogether. All the blessing of Protestantism in England, all that we are enjoying at this very day, we owe to the right exercise of private judgment.

Surely if we do not honor private judgment, we are thankless and ungrateful indeed! Reader, I warn you not to be moved by the common argument, that the right of private judgment is liable to be abused—that private judgment has done great harm, and should be avoided as a dangerous thing. Never was there a more miserable argument! Never was there one which when thrashed proves so full of chaff! Private judgment *has* been abused! I would like the objector to tell me what good gift of God has not been abused! What high principle can be named that has not been employed for the very worst of purposes? *Strength* may become tyranny when it is employed by the stronger to coerce the weaker, yet strength is a blessing when properly employed. *Liberty* may become licentiousness when every man does that which is right in his own eyes, without regarding the rights and feelings of others; yet liberty, rightly used, is a mighty blessing. *Because many things may be used improperly, are we, therefore, to give them up altogether?* Because *opium* is used improperly by some, is it not to be used as a medicine on any occasion at all? Because money may be used improperly, is all money to be cast into the sea? You cannot have good in this world without evil. You cannot have private judgment without some abusing it, and turning it to bad account.

But private judgment, people say, *has done more than good!* What harm has private judgment done, I would like to know, in matters of religion, *compared* to the harm that has been done by the neglect of it? Grant, for a moment, that among Protestants who allow private judgment, there are divisions. Grant that in the Church of Rome, where private judgment is forbidden, there are no divisions. I might easily show that *Romish unity* is far more *seeming* than real. Bishop Hall, in his book called *The Peace of Rome*, numbers up no less than three hundred differences of opinion maintained in the Romish Church. I might easily show that the divisions of Protestants are exceedingly exaggerated, and that most of them are upon points of *minor* importance. I might show that, with all the varieties of Protestantism, as men call them, there is still a vast amount of *fundamental unity and substantial agreement* among Protestants. No man can read the "Harmony of Protestant Confessions" without seeing that.

But grant for a moment that private judgment has led to divisions, and brought about varieties. I say that these divisions and varieties are but a drop of water, when *compared* with the torrent of abominations that have arisen from the Church of Rome's practice of disallowing private judgment altogether! Place the evils in two scales—the evils that have arisen from private judgment, and those that have arisen from no man being allowed to think for himself. Weigh the evils one against another, and I have no doubt as to which will be the greatest. Give me *Protestant divisions*, certainly, rather than *Popish unity*, with the fruit that it brings forth! Give me Protestant variations, rather than Romish ignorance, Romish superstition, Romish darkness, and Romish idolatry!

Let the two systems be tried by their fruits—the system that says, "Prove all things," and the system that says, "Dare to have no opinion of your own," let them be tried by their fruits in the hearts, in the intellects, in the lives, in all the ways of men—and I have no doubt as to the result!

Reader, I warn you above all things not to be moved by the specious argument, that it is humility to disallow private judgment, that it is humility to have no opinion of your own, that it is the part of a true Christian not to think for himself! I tell you that such humility is a false humility, a *humility* which does not deserve that blessed name. Call it rather *laziness!* Call it rather *idleness*. Call it rather *sloth*. It makes a man strip himself of all his responsibility, and throw the whole burden of his soul into the hands of the minister and the Church! It gives a man a mere *vicarious* religion, a religion by which he places his conscience and all his spiritual concerns under the care of others. He need not trouble himself! He need no longer think for himself! He has embarked in a safe ship, and placed his soul under a safe pilot—and will get to heaven!

Oh, beware of supposing that this deserves the name of humility. It is refusing to exercise the gift that God has given you. It is refusing to employ the sword of the Spirit which God has forged for the use of your hand. Blessed be God, our forefathers did not act upon such principles! Had they done so, we should never have had the Reformation. Had they done so, we might have been bowing down to the image of the virgin Mary at this moment, or praying to the spirits of departed saints, or having a service performed in Latin. From such humility, may the good Lord ever deliver you!

Reader, as long as you live—resolve that you will read for yourself; think for yourself, judge of the Bible for yourself; in the great matters of your soul. Have an opinion of your own. Never be ashamed of saying, "I think that this is right—because I find it in the Bible," and "I think that this is wrong—because I do not find it in the Bible." "Prove all things," and prove them by the Word of God. As long as you live, beware of the *blindfold* system, which many commend in the present day—the system of following a *leader*, and having no opinion of their own—the system which practically says, "Only keep your Church, only receive the sacraments, only believe what the ordained ministers who are set over you tell you—and then all shall be well."

I warn you, that this will not do. I warn you that if you are content with this kind of religion, you are periling your immortal soul. Let the *Bible*, and not any *Church* upon earth, or any minister upon earth, be your rule of faith.

"Prove all things" by the Word of God. And, above all, as long as you live, look forward to the great day of judgment. Think of the solemn account which every one of us shall have to give in that day before the judgment seat of Christ. We shall not be judged by Churches. We shall not be judged by whole congregations. We shall be judged *individually*, each by himself! What shall it profit you in that day to say, "Lord, Lord, I believed everything the Church told me. I received and believed everything ordained ministers set before me. I thought that whatever the Church and the ministers said, must be right"? What shall it profit us to say this, if we have held some deadly error? Surely, the voice of Him who sits upon the throne will reply, "You had the Scriptures. You had a book plain and easy—to him that will read it and search it in a childlike spirit. Why did you not use the Word of God when it was given to you? You had a reasonable mind given you to understand that Bible. Why did you not 'Prove all things,' and thus keep clear of error?" Oh, reader, if you refuse to exercise your private judgment, think of that awful day—and beware!

II. And now let me speak of the duty and necessity of *keeping firm hold upon truth*. The words of the Apostle on this subject are pithy and forcible. "Hold fast," he says, "that which is good." It is as if he said to us, "When you have found the truth for yourself; and when you are satisfied that it is Christ's truth—that truth which the Scriptures set forth—then get a firm hold upon it, grasp it, keep it in your heart, never let it go!" He speaks as one who knew what the hearts of all Christians are. He knew that our grasp of the Gospel, at our best, is very cold—that our love soon waxes feeble—that our faith soon wavers—that our zeal soon flags—

that familiarity with Christ's truth often brings with it a species of contempt—that, like Israel, we are apt to be discouraged by the length of our journey—and, like Peter, ready to sleep one moment and fight the next—but, like Peter, not ready to watch and pray.

All this Paul remembered, and, like a faithful watchman, he cries, by the Holy Spirit, "Hold fast that which is good!" He speaks as if he foresaw by the Spirit that the good tidings of the Gospel would soon be corrupted, spoiled, and plucked away from the Church at Thessalonica. He speaks as one who foresaw that Satan and all his agents would labor hard to cast down Christ's truth. He writes as though he would forewarn men of this danger, and he cries, "Hold fast that which is good." Reader, the advice is always needed as long as the world stands.

There is a tendency to *decay* in the very best of human institutions. The best visible Church of Christ is not free from this liability to degenerate. It is made up of fallible men. There is always in it a tendency to decay. We see the leaven of evil creeping into many a Church, even in the Apostle's time. There were evils in the *Corinthian* Church, evils in the *Ephesian* Church, evils in the *Galatian* Church. All these things are meant to be our warnings and beacons in these latter times! All show the great necessity laid upon the Church to remember the Apostle's words: "Hold fast that which is good!"

Many a Church of Christ since then has fallen away for the lack of remembering this principle. Their ministers and members forgot that Satan is always laboring to bring in false doctrine. They forgot that he can transform himself into an angel of light—that he can make darkness appear as light, and light appear as darkness; truth appear as falsehood, and falsehood appear as truth. If he cannot *destroy* Christianity, he ever tries to *corrupt* it. If he cannot prevent the form of godliness, he endeavors to rob Churches of the power. No Church is ever safe which forgets these things, and does not bear in mind the Apostle's injunction: "Hold fast that which is good!"

Reader, if ever there was a time in the world when Churches were put upon their trial, whether they would hold fast the truth or not—that time is the present time, and those Churches are the Protestant Churches of our own land. Popery, that old enemy of our nation, is coming in upon us in this day like a flood. We are assaulted by open enemies without, and betrayed continually by false friends within. The numbers of Roman Catholic churches, and chapels, and schools, and convents and monasteries, are continually increasing around us. Month after month brings tidings of some new defection from the ranks of the Church of England, to the ranks of the Church of Rome. Already the clergy of the Church of Rome are using great swelling words about things to come, and boasting that, sooner or later, England shall once more be brought back to the orbit from whence she fell, and take her place in the Catholic system! Already the Pope is parceling our country into his bishoprics, and speaks like one who thinks that by-and-by he shall divide the spoil. Already he seems to foresee a time when England shall be as Rome, when London shall be as the Vatican itself. Surely, now or never, we ought all of us to awake, and "Hold fast that which is good."

We supposed, some of us, in our blindness, that the power of the Church of Rome was ended. We dreamed, some of us, in our folly, that the Reformation had ended the Popish controversy, and that if Romanism did survive, Romanism was altogether changed. If we did think so, we have lived to learn that we made a most grievous mistake! Rome never changes! It is her boast that she is always the same. The *snake* is not killed! He was wounded at the time of the Reformation, but was not destroyed. The Romish Antichrist is not dead. He was cast down for a little season, like the fabled giant buried under Etna, but his deadly wound is healed, the grave is opening once more, and Romish Antichrist is coming forth! The unclean spirit of Popery is not laid in his own place. Rather he seems to say, "My house in England is now swept and garnished for me; let me return to the place from whence I came forth."

And, reader, the question is now, whether we are going to abide quietly, sit still, and fold our hands, and do nothing to resist the assault. Are we really men of understanding of the times? Do we know the day of our visitation? Surely, this is a crisis in the history of our Churches and of our land. It is a time which will soon prove whether we know the value of our privileges, or whether, like Amalek, "the first of the nations," our "latter end shall be that we perish forever." It is a time which will soon prove whether we intend to allow our candlestick to be quietly removed—or repent, and do our first works, lest any man should take our crown.

If we love the open Bible—if we love the preaching of the Gospel—if we love the freedom of reading that Bible, and the opportunity of hearing that Gospel, with no man forbidding us—if we love civil liberty—if we love religious liberty—if these are precious to our souls, we must all make up our minds to hold fast, lest by and by we lose all.

Reader, if we mean to hold fast, every parish, every congregation, every Christian man, and every Christian woman, must do their part in contending for the truth. Each should work, and each should pray, and each should labor as if the preservation of the pure Gospel depended upon himself or herself, and upon no one else at all. The rich must not leave the matter to the poor, nor the poor to the rich. We must all work. Every living soul has a sphere of influence. Let him see to it that he fills it. Every living soul can throw some weight into the scale of the Gospel. Let him see to it that he casts it in. Let everyone know his own individual responsibility in this matter; and all, by God's help, will be well.

If we would hold fast that which is good, we must never tolerate any doctrine which is not the pure doctrine of Christ's Gospel. There is a *hatred* which is downright charity—that is the *hatred of erroneous doctrine*. There is an intolerance which is downright praiseworthy—that is the *intolerance of false teaching*. Who would ever think of tolerating a *little poison* given to him day by day? If men come among you who do not preach "all the counsel of God," who do not preach of Christ, and sin, and holiness, of ruin, and redemption, and regeneration; and do not preach of these things in a Scriptural way, you ought to cease to hear them. You ought to act upon the injunction given by the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament: "Cease, my son, to hear the instruction which causes to err from the words of knowledge." (Proverbs 19:27.) You ought to carry out the spirit shown by the Apostle Paul, in Gal. 1:8: "Though we, or an angel from heaven preach any other doctrine unto you than that which we have preached, let him be accursed!"

If we can bear to hear Christ's truth mangled or adulterated—and can see no harm in listening to that which is "another Gospel"—and can sit at ease while "sham Christianity" is poured into our ears—and can go home comfortably afterwards, and not burn with holy indignation—if this is the case, there is little chance of our ever doing much to resist Rome! If we are content to hear Jesus Christ not put in His rightful place—we are not men and women who are likely to do Christ much service, or fight a good fight on His side. He who is not zealous against error—is not likely to he zealous for truth. If we would hold fast the truth—we must be ready to unite with all who hold the truth, and love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. We must he ready to lay aside all minor questions as things of subordinate importance. All minor points of difference, however important they may be in their place and in their proportion—all ought to be regarded as subordinate questions. I ask no man to give up his private opinions about them. I wish no man to do violence

to his conscience. All I say is, that these questions are wood, hay, and stubble, when the very *foundations* of the faith are in danger! The Philistines are upon us! Can we make common cause against them, or can we not? This is the one point for our consideration.

Surely it is not right to say that we expect to spend eternity with men in heaven, and yet cannot work for a few years with them in this world. The presence of a *common foe* ought to sink minor differences. We must hold together. Depend upon it, all Christians must hold together, if they mean to "hold fast that which is good." Some men may say, "This is very troublesome." Some may say, "Why not sit still and be quiet?" Some may say, "Oh, that horrid *controversy!* What need is there for all this trouble? Why should we care so much about these points of difference?" I ask, what good thing was ever *gotten* or ever *kept,* without trouble? Gold does not lie open in the fields, but deep in the earth. Pearls do not grow on trees, but deep down in Indian seas. Difficulties are never overcome without struggles. *Mountains* are seldom climbed without fatigue. *Oceans* are not crossed without tossings on the waves. *Peace* is seldom obtained without war. And Christ's truth is seldom maintained, without pains, without struggles, and without trouble.

Let the man who talks of "trouble" tell me where we would be at this day—if our forefathers had not taken some trouble? Where would be the Gospel of England—if martyrs had not given their bodies to be burned? Who shall estimate our debt to Cranmer, Latimer, Hooper, Ridley and Taylor, and their brethren? They held fast that which is good. They would not give up one jot of truth. They counted not their lives dear, for the Gospel's sake. They labored, and they travailed—and we have entered into their labors. Shame upon us if we will not take a little trouble to keep with us—what they so nobly won!

Trouble or no trouble—pains or no pains—controversy, or no controversy—one thing is very sure: that nothing but Christ's Gospel will ever do good to our own souls. Nothing else will maintain our Churches. Nothing else will ever bring down God's blessing upon our land. If, therefore, we love our own souls, or if we love our country's prosperity, or if we love to keep our Churches standing, we must remember the Apostles words, and "hold fast," hold firmly the Gospel, and refuse to let it go!

And now, reader, I have set before you two things. One is the right, the duty, and necessity of private judgment. The other is the duty and necessity of keeping firm hold upon truth. It only remains for me to **APPLY** these things to your own individual conscience by a few concluding words.

For one thing, if it is your duty to "prove all things," let me beseech and exhort you to arm yourself with a thorough knowledge of the Word of God. Read your Bible regularly. Become familiar with your Bible. Prove all religious truth when it is brought before you—by the Bible. A little knowledge of the Bible will not suffice. Depend upon it, a man must know his Bible well if he is to prove religious teachings by it; and he must read it regularly if he would know it well. There is no royal road to a knowledge of the Bible. There must be reading daily, regular reading of the Book—or the Book will not be known. As one said quaintly, but most truly, "Justification may be by faith, but a knowledge of the Bible comes only by works." The devil can quote Scripture. He could go to our Lord and quote Scripture when he wished to tempt Him. A man must be able to perceive error, from his knowledge of Scripture, when he hears error taught—lest he be deceived. Neglect your Bible, and nothing that I know of can prevent your becoming a Roman Catholic, an Arminian, a Socinian, a Jew, or a Turk—if a plausible advocate of any of these false systems shall happen to meet you.

For another thing, if it be right to "prove all things," take care to test every Roman Catholic doctrine, by whoever put forward, by the written Word of God. Believe nothing, however speciously advanced—believe nothing, with whatever weight of authority brought forward—believe nothing, though supported by all the Fathers— believe nothing, except it can be proved to you out of Scripture! That alone is infallible. That alone is light. That alone is God's measure of truth and falsehood. "Let God be true—and every man a liar."

The New Zealanders' answer to the Romish priests who went among them, is an answer never to be forgotten. They heard these priests urge upon them the *worship of the Virgin Mary*. They heard them recommend them to *pray to saints*. They heard them advocate the use of *images*. They heard them speak of the *authority of the Church of Rome*, the *supremacy of the Pope*, the antiquity of the Romish church. They knew the Bible, and they heard all this calmly, and gave one simple but memorable answer: "It cannot be true—because it is not in the Book!" All the learning in the world could never have supplied a better answer than that! Latimer, or Knox, or Owen, could never have made a more crushing reply. Let this be our rule when we are attacked by Romanists; let us hold fast the sword of the Spirit, and say in reply to all their arguments, "It cannot be true—because it is not in the Book!"

Last of all, if it be right to "hold fast that which is good," let us make sure that we have each laid hold personally, upon Christ's truth for ourselves. Reader, it will not save you to know all controversies, and to be able to detect everything which is false. *Head knowledge will never bring you to heaven!* It will not save us to be able to argue and reason with Roman Catholics, or to detect the errors of Popes' Bulls, or Pastoral Letters. Let us see that we each lay hold upon Jesus Christ for ourselves, by our own personal faith. Let us see to it that we each flee for refuge, and lay hold upon the hope set before us in His glorious Gospel. Let us do this, and all shall be well with us, whatever else may go ill. Let us do this, and then all things are ours. The Church may fall. The State may go to ruin. The foundations of all establishments may be shaken. The enemies of truth may for a season prevail. But as for us—all shall be well. We shall have in this world, peace—and in the world which is to come, life everlasting; for we shall have Christ, and having Him, we have all. This is real good, lasting good—good in sickness, good in health, good in life, good in death, good in time, and good in eternity! All other things are but uncertain. They all wear out. They fade. They droop. They wither. They decay. The longer we have them the more worthless we find them, and the more we realize, that everything here below is "vanity and vexation of spirit."

But as for hope in Christ, that is always good. The longer we use it—the better it seems. The more we wear it in our hearts—the brighter it will look. It is good when we first have it. It is better far when we grow older. It is better still in the day of trial, and the hour of death. And best of all, depend upon it—it will prove good in the day of judgment. Reader, if you have not yet laid hold on this hope in Christ, seek it at once. Call on the Lord Jesus to give it to you. Give Him no rest until you know and feel that you are His. If you have laid hold on this hope, hold it fast. Prize it highly, for it will stand by you when everything else fails!

The Blood of the Lamb

by J. C. Ryle

"These are those who came out of the great tribulation. They washed their robes, and made them white in **the blood of the Lamb**. Therefore they are before the throne of God, they serve him day and night in his temple. He who sits on the throne will spread his tabernacle over them. They will never be hungry, neither thirsty any more; neither will the sun beat on them, nor any heat; for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne shepherds them, and leads them to springs of waters of life. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes." (Revelation 7:14-17)

This is a very glorious account, and yet we need not wonder, for it was a vision of heavenly things. You may call it a short glimpse within the veil which separated this world from the world to come. We read in the verses before our text, that the apostle John saw in the spirit a great multitude which no man could number, clothed with white robes, and bearing palms in their hands, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. And not knowing himself who or what these might be, he received information from one of the elders (or chief angels), and was told in the words you have heard, that these were the blessed company of all faithful people, the redeemed out of every nation and kindred and tongue, the true children of God, the heirs of everlasting salvation.

I propose this morning to consider fully the account which this elder gave. I counsel you, beloved, to search and see what you know of it in your own selves. The day shall come when the sun shall become black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon shall become as blood, and the stars of heaven shall fall unto the earth, and those who are strangers to the character described in our text shall find it had been better for them if they had never been born. Blessed are those who are not ashamed to confess that they seek a more abiding city than this world, even a heavenly one, and count all things loss if they can only win Christ and be found in Him.

Now there are three points to be examined in our text.

I. First, where did these saints come from, whom John saw.

II. Second, how they had been able to reach the place where he saw them.

III. Third and last, what was their reward.

I. First, then, we learn that God's saints have come out of great tribulation. That is, they have come out of a world full of sin and danger, a world in which they have so much to encounter which is hurtful to their souls that you may truly call it a place of great tribulation. How strange that seems! This earth so fair and lovely as it appears, so full of everything to make life enjoyable; this earth on which millions set all their affections and have not a thought beyond it—is a wilderness beset with trials and difficulties to every true believer. Write this down on the tablet of your memory, that if you make up your mind to follow Christ and have your soul saved, you will sooner or later have to go through great tribulation.

Brethren, why are these things so? Because **the WORLD** you live in is a fallen world, the devil is the prince of it, and by far the greater part of the men and women in it have shut their eyes and given themselves up to his service. Once become a follower of Christ, you will see iniquity abounding on every side, you will see your blessed Savior's laws trampled under foot, you will find the immense majority of those around you to be spiritually dark, sleeping and dead—some altogether thoughtless, some resting on a form of godliness without the power; and if you love the Lord Jesus in sincerity, to see your Redeemer thus despised, will make the world a place of tribulation.

But this is not all. The earthly-minded, the thoughtless, will never let you hold on your way in peace. Oh no! you are condemning their practices and fashions, you are a witness against their deadness and neglect of true religion; and so if you set your face towards Zion they will try to turn you back. Perhaps it will be laughter, perhaps it will be hard words. One day they will accuse you of pride, another of self-conceit; sometimes they will annoy you with arguments, sometimes they will avoid your company—but, one way or another, you will soon discover that the worldly-minded will never let you go quietly to heaven. You cannot please them. You may exercise yourself like Paul to have a conscience void of offence towards all men; it matters not, you cannot serve the Lord and Mammon, and if you walk with God, you will find your way is spoken against by nearly all.

And then there is **your own HEART**—deceitful, treacherous, and cold—the flesh lusting against the spirit and the spirit warring with the flesh; your readiness to make excuses, your deadness in the use of means, your wandering thought in prayer, your lack of faith in in times of sorrow, your presumptuous self-confidence in time of joy. O Christian, you have **an enemy within** which needs your constant watchfulness; you have a fountain of trials in your own bosom; you will have daily occasion to crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts.

And add to this those **CARES** which you have in common with all children of Adam—sickness, disease and pain, the loss of property, the unkindness of friends, the daily toil for a livelihood, the fear of poverty, the many nameless causes of anxiety which every week almost brings round—and say whether it be not true that all God's people come out of great tribulation. They must deny themselves, they must take up the cross, they must reckon on many a trial, if they would enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Mark well, beloved, this truth—the path to glory has been always filled with thorns; it is the experience of all those holy men who have left us an example that we should walk in their steps: Abraham, and Jacob, and Moses, and David, and Job, and Daniel, there was not one of them who was not perfected through sufferings.

We are all too much disposed to think a time may come when we shall have a season of repose and not be harassed with these vexations and disappointments. Almost everyone supposes he is tried more than his neighbors—but let us not be deceived—this earth is not our rest; it is a place for working, not for sleeping. Here is the reason that so many run well for a time, and seem to have the love of Christ in their hearts, and yet, when persecution or affliction arises for the word's sake, they fall away. They had not counted the cost; they had reckoned on the reward without the labor; they had forgotten this most important point in the character of God's saints, "they are men who have come out of great tribulation."

This seems a hard saying—but I would have you know these heavy trials are laid on us for the most wise and merciful purposes. We

live in such a fair and pleasant world, we are so surrounded with so much that is smiling and mirthful, that if we were not often obliged to taste of sickness and trial or disappointments, we would forget our heavenly home, and pitch our tents in this Sodom. This is why God's people pass through great tribulations. This is why they are often called upon to suffer the sting of affliction and anxiety—or weep over the grave of those whom they have loved as their own soul. It is their Father's hand which chastens them! It is thus He weans their affections from things below—and fixes them on Himself! It is thus He trains them for eternity, and cuts the threads one by one which bind their wavering hearts to earth.

No doubt such chastening is grievous for the time—but still it brings many a hidden grace to light, and cuts down many a secret seed of evil. We shall see those who have suffered most shining among the brightest stars in the assembly of heaven. The **purest gold** is that which has been longest in the refiner's furnace. The **brightest diamond** is often that which has required the most grinding and polishing. "For our momentary light affliction is producing for us an absolutely incomparable eternal weight of glory!"

The saints are men who have *come out* of great tribulation, they are never left to perish in it; the last night of weeping will soon be spent, the last wave of trouble will have rolled over us, and then we shall have a peace which passes all understanding; we shall be at home forever with the Lord.

I repeat, this seems at first sight a hard saying; and yet it is a true one. Count up the enemies which encompass the children of God—the **world** with its unkindnesses or its snares and seductions; the **flesh** with its unceasing backwardness and indifference to the Lord's service; the **devil** with his arts and devices—and see whether you could give a more correct picture of the saints' experience than may be found in the words, "these are those who came out of great tribulation." An unconverted man may not understand this, and a thoughtless man may not consider it; they neither know nor care about this spiritual conflict; it is foolishness to them—but those who are born again, and have learned the value of their own souls, can set to their seals that it is all true.

II. The second question rising out of the text is this: **"How did these shining ones reach that blessed place where John saw them?"** Think not it was their own righteousness which brought salvation, and their own strength which upheld them. The cross will surely lead to the crown—but the cross will never deserve it; not all the tears which they have shed, not all the patience they have shown in tribulation, could ever avail to make atonement for transgression—or wash away one single sin. What says the apostle? **"They have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb!"** They have not been ashamed to acknowledge their iniquities, and they have laid them all before the Lord Jesus Christ, and for His cross and sufferings, and for His righteousness' sake, they have sought a free forgiveness, and they have found it. Lay this to heart, all you who are wise in your own eyes and holy in your own sight. No doubt there were prophets and righteous men of old, men who had wrought miracles and given their bodies to be burned, men who had been valiant for the truth even unto death, in that great multitude which John beheld—but none came boasting of his own attainments and clothed in his own apparel—they were all washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb!

And lay this well to heart, all you that are pressed down with the burden of your sins, if any such there be, and dare not lift up your eyes to heaven. No doubt there were exceedingly great sinners in that company, many who had been thieves and harlots—the very filth of the earth and off-scouring of all things—and yet they found a place of forgiveness and, behold—they are washed, and became white as the driven snow. They were in a world of tribulation like yourselves—but they found time to listen to the gospel, and when they listened they believed. They did not scorn of the goodly land before them; they did not make light of their Master's invitations—but they loathed themselves for their past transgressions and forgetfulness, and with earnest supplication and prayer sought to the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. And no sooner did they knock than the door was opened!

They were not content with hearing of this fountain for sin and uncleanness, like many of yourselves, and talking of it as a thing to be admired, and very useful for others. They did not sit beside the pool of Bethesda without endeavoring to step in—but they cried, "Lord, have mercy, wash *me*, even *me!*" And so they were washed, they were sanctified, they were justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God; they obtained a free pardon, and their iniquities were all taken away. By nature they were as weak and timid and sinful and shortcoming as any among yourselves—there is not a danger or an obstacle or a doubt or a discouragement in any of your minds with which they were not familiar—and yet they were all saved by the free grace of God, they were washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb, they were more than conquerors through Him who loved them.

Around that throne you would find many who used to be the vilest of the vile. Go up, and ask them, everyone, "How did you come hither? Where did you get that white robe?" They will answer you, "We were once without God in the world—without light and without hope. We cared for nothing but fulfilling the desires of the flesh and the mind, we were known as drunkards and revelers and fornicators. Many a time we hardened our hearts against advice. Many a careless neighbor did we follow to the grave, and tempted God to cut us off by continued impenitence! But at last our conscience spoke so loudly that we dared no longer delay. We tried to keep God's law—but we could not answer it one in a thousand, it brought us to flat despair. We made a great profession, and men said we were converted—but it would not do—sin lay upon us like a mountain, all unatoned for, and we were miserable. But we heard a voice, saying, 'If any man thirsts, let him come unto Me and drink!' 'He who believes on Me, though he were dead yet shall he live!' 'Come unto Me and I will give you rest!' And when we heard it, we went at once to the Lord Jesus Christ, we waited for nothing, we laid all our sorrows and all our wickedness before Him, and, behold, that very day we were healed and made whole, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing!" Such is the answer you would get from many in that company which the apostle saw.

This is the way you must walk in, if you would ever stand with them in glory. You must lay aside all pride and self-dependence, you must use the tax collector's prayer, you must believe yourself a miserable undeserving sinner, you must lay hold on the cross of Christ with a simple childlike faith, and pray that you may be washed in His blood and pardoned for His name's sake. Show me another way of salvation which will bring you peace at the last; I cannot find one in the Bible. I hear of men who live on many a long year without a thought about this precious washing in Christ's blood, this precious garment of Christ's righteousness, and yet can tell us they trust it will be all right with them at last. But if the Bible is true—this is impossible. I see many who profess a belief in their need of this fountain for sin and uncleanness—but I fear they do no more than talk about it, they do not count all things loss until they are forgiven. But whether men will receive the doctrine or not, the foundation of God stands sure, and though the saints of God form a multitude which none can number—I cannot read of one who had not washed his robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

III. The third and last part of my text is that which describes **the reward of the redeemed**. "They washed their robes, and made them white in the Lamb's blood. Therefore they are before the throne of God, they serve him day and night in his temple. He who sits on the throne will spread his tabernacle over them. They will never be hungry, neither thirsty any more; neither will the sun beat on them, nor any heat; for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne shepherds them, and leads them to springs of waters of life. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes." Here is a list of privileges. You have heard of tribulation—but it leads, you see, to comfort. You have heard of the cross—but the end is indeed a crown.

Now we can tell you something of the affliction of God's children, for we are able to speak that we know—but when we have to treat of the glory which shall be revealed, we are on ground which human eye has not seen, and we must be careful not to go beyond what is written.

The saints "**shall serve God day and night**." There shall be no weariness in heaven; there shall be no earthly labors to distract our attention. Here, in this present world, alas! the cares of the world are continually breaking in, and these poor frail bodies of ours do often bind us down to the earth by their weakness, even when the spirit is willing. We may be on the mount for a short season sometimes—but our powers are soon exhausted. But there we shall have no wandering thoughts, no distractions, no bodily wants, we shall never faint!

How little indeed do we **worship** God in spirit and in truth; at our very best moments, how cold and dull we feel towards our blessed Redeemer, how willing to allow any excuse for shortening our prayers and diminishing our communion with our Father who is in heaven. But those who stand before the throne of God shall feel no fatigue, they will require no repose, they will count it their highest privilege to be continually singing the song of Moses and the Lamb, and saying, "Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him who sits on the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever!"

But let us read on. "**He who sits on the throne shall dwell among them.**" They shall no longer walk by faith, and see through a glass darkly. They shall see face to face the God in whom they have believed, and behold His countenance as that of a familiar friend. They shall have no more dark seasons, they shall never feel that their beloved Lord is at a distance, they shall never tremble lest they compel Him to withdraw Himself by their lack of service—but they shall see Him as He is, and be forever at His side. And if, while presently groaning in their body of sin, the Christian finds such peace and comfort in drawing near to God in prayer—if even in the flesh he has tasted that it is a joyful thing to pour out his heart before the throne of mercy—oh! who shall describe his blessedness when he shall find himself forever in his Redeemer's presence, and shall be told—It is finished, you shall never leave this holy place?

It is a pleasant thing to have the company of those we love: our very earthly happiness is incomplete while those who have the keys of our affection, the husband, the wife, the brother, the sister, the friends who are as our own souls, are far away. But there shall be no such incompleteness in heaven; there we shall have the presence of our glorious Lord before our eyes, who loved us and gave Himself for us, and paid the price of our salvation, even His own blood, and the Scripture shall be fulfilled which says, "In Your presence there is fullness of joy, and at Your right hand there are pleasures for evermore!"

But we may not linger here. We read, "**They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more.**" They shall have no more needs and necessities; they shall no longer stand in need of daily application for the bread of life, and find their souls starving in the wilderness of this world; they shall not walk as pilgrims trembling lest their spiritual food should not support them, and thirsting after a fuller draught of the water of life. But they shall find that prophecy made good, "When I awake up after Your likeness, I shall be satisfied!"

But again, "**the sun shall not light on them, nor any heat.**" There shall be no more trial and persecution. There shall not be one reviling tongue nor one ensnaring temptation. The mockers and the flatterers and the scoffers shall be silent forever, the fiery darts of the wicked will all be quenched; there will be nothing to mar and disturb the Christian's peace. The time will have come at last when he may rest! He will be far above the scene of his old conflicts, and the strife shall never be renewed.

But what is the crowning privilege? "**The Lamb who is in the midst of the throne shepherds them, and leads them to springs of waters of life. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes!**" The Lord Jesus Christ Himself shall minister to their comforts; the same kind hand which raised them from the death of sin to the life of righteousness, which healed their spiritual diseases, and brought them health and peace, and made them new creatures upon earth—the same hand shall welcome them in heaven, and conduct them as highly favored guests to a banquet of happiness—such as no eye has ever seen, nor heart ever conceived!

Time was when He sought them out as wandering sheep in the wilderness of this world, and made them members of His little flock by the renewing of the Holy Spirit, and refreshed their weary, heavy laden souls with the water of life. And the same Jesus who began the good work in the days of their tribulation upon earth, the same Good Shepherd shall complete the work in heaven! Here on earth, they have tasted something of the *streams,* a little trembling company, from north and south, east and west. But there they will be gathered around the *fountain* itself, and there will be one fold and one shepherd, one heart and one mind, and none shall make them afraid.

And then there shall be no more weeping, for "God Himself shall wipe away all tears." A dwelling-place in which there shall be no weeping! I know no part of heaven more difficult to imagine. We live in a world of sorrow, a very valley of tears; tears for ourselves and tears for others, tears over our own shortcomings, tears over the unbelief of those we love, tears over disappointed hopes, tears over the graves of those on whom our affections are set, and all because of sin! There would have been no sorrow if Adam had never fallen—but our very weeping is a proof of sin!

Yet it shall not always be so: a day is still to come when sadness shall flee away, and God Himself shall say—'Refrain from weeping, for the former things are passed away.' There shall be no sadness in heaven, for there shall be no sin! The days of our tribulation shall be forgotten! We shall be able at last to **love** our God without coldness, to **reverence** His holiness without torment, to **trust** Him without despair, to **serve** Him without weariness, without interruption, without distraction. The days of weakness and corruption will be past, and we shall be like our Lord in **holiness** as well as **happiness**; in **purity** as well as **immortality**.

And now, beloved, let me ask you what is the purpose for which the Church of God has been established upon earth, and ministers have been appointed to watch for your souls? What is the object of Bibles and ordinances, and prayer and preaching? Is it not simply

this—that you may be numbered with the saints in glory everlasting, that you may enjoy those blessings you have heard described?

Then search and see what SOLEMN QUESTIONS spring out of my text. Have you taken up the cross? are you denying yourself? do you know anything of this spiritual tribulation? Be very sure, that unless you will declare yourself decidedly on the Lord's side, and fight His battle with the ungodly world, and the lusts of the flesh, and the wiles of the devil; you will never stand before the throne in robes of white, and carry the palm of victory in your hand!

That carelessness about sin, that trifling with temptation, that earnestness about the things of time, that forgetfulness about eternity, that readiness to swim with the tide about religion, that unwillingness to become more serious than your neighbors, that fear of being thought righteous overmuch, that love of the world's good opinion—is this what you call coming out of great tribulation? Is this living in the Spirit? Is this striving and laboring after eternal life? Oh, look to your foundations, set your house in order. No empty 'trust in God's mercy' will ever save you. You were not baptized unto idleness and indifference. Without a real hatred of sin, and a real forsaking of sin, Christ can profit you nothing. You never can be made white with the blood of the Lamb—unless you desire to have this earth's defilements really washed away!

And then consider, lastly, O unhappy worldling—could you be happy in the heaven you have heard described? Don't you know that sickness and death seldom work a change of heart, they seldom plant in man new taste and new desires? Do you think that men who count it a great trouble to come to church, and find the services a weariness and rejoice when they are over—do you think that such would be ready to serve God day and night in His temple? Will those who take no pleasure in drawing near to Jesus in prayer—delight to be forever in His presence and dwell with Him? Are you who never hunger and thirst after righteousness—are you to be satisfied with the living fountains of water? Are you who never know what it is to weep over sin and corruption, who never grieve over the wickedness of this world—are you likely to understand the privilege of that holy rest, when God shall wipe away all tears? Oh, no, it cannot be, it cannot be!

Whatever a man sows—he shall also reap! Whatever we love in time—we shall love in eternity! Whatever we think wearisome now—we shall think wearisome then. You must be born again—or heaven itself would be a miserable abode! There is no place in heaven for the worldly-minded and profane. You must be renewed in the spirit of your minds, or you will hear that dreadful voice—Friend, how did you come here without a wedding-garment? You must become new creatures! How long will you insult your Redeemer by putting it off? Oh! pray you to the Lord Jesus Christ, while it is called today, to send His Holy Spirit on you! Go to the fountain, while the door of mercy is yet open—wash and be clean!

But blessed are all you who mourn for your sin—for you shall be comforted. Blessed are you who are persecuted for righteousness' sake—for great is your reward in heaven. You have wept with those who weep—but you shall soon rejoice with those who rejoice, and your joy shall no man take away. It is but a single step, and you shall be forever with the Lord, where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest! The worm may destroy these bodies, and yet in the flesh you shall see God, and your own eyes shall behold Him, and your own ears shall hear Him say, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father—inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world!"

The saints whose faith and patience you have so often admired; the holy men and women of whom you have so often said, "Oh, that I were like them"; the ministers who have shown you the way of life, and implored you to be steadfast and unmoveable; the friends who advised you to come out of the world, and took sweet counsel with you about the kingdom of God; the beloved ones of your own house, who slept in Jesus and went home before you all are there—are all waiting to receive you! There shall be no more parting, no more weeping, no more separation! And you, even you, this vile body being changed, shall sing the song of the redeemed: "Unto Him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests unto God and His Father—to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever!" In this world you may have tribulation—but be of good cheer—your Lord and Savior has overcome the world!

The Lord's Supper

by J.C. Ryle

"A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup." 1 Corinthians 11:28

The words which form the tittle of this paper refer to the subject of vast importance. That subject is the Lord's Supper.

Perhaps no part of the Christian religion is so thoroughly misunderstood as the Lord's Supper. On no point have there been so many disputes, strifes, and controversies for almost 1800 years. On no point have mistakes done so much harm. The very ordinance which was meant for our peace and profit has become the cause of discord and the occasion of sin. These things ought not to be!

I make no excuse for including the Lord's Supper among the leading points of "practical" Christianity. I firmly believe that ignorant views or false doctrine about this ordinance lie at the root of some of the present divisions of professing Christians. Some neglect it altogether; some completely misunderstand it; some exalt it to a position it was never meant to occupy, and turn it into an idol. If I can throw a little light on it, and clear up the doubts in some minds, I will feel very thankful. It is hopeless, I fear, to expect that the controversy about the Lord's Supper will ever be finally closed until the Lord comes. But it is not too much to hope that the fog and mystery and obscurity with which it is surrounded in some minds, may be cleared away by plain Bible truth.

In examining the Lord's Supper I will be content with asking four practical questions, and offering answers to them.

I. Why was the Lord's Supper ordained?

II. Who ought to go to the Table and be communicants?

III. What may communicants expect from the Lord's Supper?

IV. Why do many so-called Christians never go to the Lord's Table?

I think it will be impossible to handle these four questions fairly, honestly, and impartially, without seeing the subject of this paper more clearly, and getting some distinct and practical ideas about some leading errors of our day. I say "practical" emphatically. My chief aim in this volume is to promote practical Christianity.

I. In the first place, "why was the Lord's Supper ordained?" It was ordained for the continual remembrance of the sacrifice of the death of Christ, and of the benefits which we thereby receive. The *bread* which in the Lord's Supper is broken, given, and eaten, is meant to remind us of Christ's body given on the cross for our sins. The *wine* which is poured out and received, is meant to remind us of Christ's blood shed on the cross for our sins. He who eats that bread and drinks that wine is reminded, in the most striking and forcible manner—of the benefits Christ has obtained for his soul, and of the death of Christ as the hinge and turning point on which all those benefits depend.

Now, is the view here stated the doctrine of the New Testament? If it is not, forever let it be rejected, cast aside, and refused by men. If it is, let us never be ashamed to hold it close, profess our belief in it, pin our faith on it, and steadfastly refuse to hold any other view, no matter who teaches it.

In subjects like this we must call no man master. It matters little what great theologians and learned preachers have thought fit to put forth about the Lord's Supper. If they teach more than the Word of God contains—they are not to be believed. I take up my Bible and turn to the New Testament. There I find no less than four separate accounts of the first appointment of the Lord's Supper. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and Paul, all four describe it: all four agree in telling us what our Lord did on this memorable occasion. Only two tell us the reason why our Lord commanded that His disciples were to eat the bread and drink the cup. Paul and Luke both record the remarkable words, *"Do this in remembrance of me."* Paul adds his own inspired comment: *"For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."* (Luke 22:19; 1 Corinthians 11:25-26). When Scripture speaks so clearly, why can't men be content with it? Why should we mystify and confuse a subject which in the New Testament is so simple?

The "continual remembrance of Christ's death" was the one grand object for which the Lord's Supper was ordained. He who goes further than this is adding to God's Word, and does so to the great peril of his soul.

Now, is it reasonable to suppose that our Lord would appoint an ordinance for so simple a purpose as "remembering His death?" It most certainly is! Of all the facts in His earthly ministry none are equal in importance to that of His death. It was the great settlement for man's sin, which had been appointed in God's promise from the foundation of the world. It was the great redemption of almighty power, to which every sacrifice of animals, from the fall of man, continually pointed. It was the grand end and purpose for which the Messiah came into the world. It was the cornerstone and foundation of all man's hopes of pardon and peace with God. In short, Christ would have lived, and taught, and preached, and prophesied, and performed miracles in vain, if He had not *crowned it all by dying for our sins as our Substitute on the Cross!* His death was our life. His death was the payment of our sin-debt to God. Without His death we would have been the most miserable of all creatures!

No wonder that an ordinance was specially appointed to remind us of our Savior's death. It is the one thing which poor, weak, sinful man needs to be continually reminded. Does the New Testament authorize men to say that the Lord's Supper was ordained to be a *sacrifice*, and that in it Christ's *literal* body and blood are present under the forms of bread and wine? Most certainly not! When the Lord Jesus said to the disciples, "This is my Body," and "this is my Blood," He clearly meant, "This *bread* in my hand is an symbol of my Body, and this cup of *wine* in my hand contains a symbol of my Blood." The disciples were accustomed to hear Him use such language. They remembered His saying, "The *field* is the world, and the *good seed* stands for the sons of the kingdom. The *weeds* are the sons of the evil one" (Matthew 13:38). It never entered into their minds that He meant to say He was holding His own body and His own blood in His hands, and literally giving them His literal body and blood to eat and drink! Not one of the writers of the New Testament ever speaks of the Lord's Supper as a *sacrifice*, or calls the Lord's Table an *altar*, or even hints that a Christian minister is a *sacrificing priest*. The universal doctrine of the New Testament is that after the *one* offering of Christ on the cross, there remains no more need of sacrifice.

If anyone believes that Paul's words to the Hebrews, *"We have an altar"* (Hebrews 13:10), are a proof that the Lord's table is an altar, I remind him "Christians have an altar where they partake. That altar is Christ our Lord—who is Altar, Priest, and Sacrifice, all in One." Throughout the Communion Service the one idea of the ordinance continually pressed on our attention is that of a "remembrance" of Christ's death. As to any *presence of Christ's natural body* and blood under the forms of bread and wine, the clear answer is that "the natural body and blood of Christ are in heaven, and not here." Those Roman Catholics who delight in talking of the "altar," the "sacrifice," the "priest," and the "real presence" in the Lord's Supper—would do well to remember that they are using language which is entirely non-Biblical.

The point before us is one of vast importance. Let us lay hold upon it firmly, and never let it go. It is the very point on which our Reformers had their sharpest controversy with the Roman Catholics, and went to the stake, rather than give way. Sooner than admit that the Lord's Supper was a sacrifice, they cheerfully laid down their lives. To bring back the doctrine of the "real presence," and to turn the communion into the Roman Catholic "mass," is to pour contempt on our Martyrs, and to upset the first principles of the Protestant Reformation. No, rather, it is to ignore the plain teaching of God's Word, and do dishonor to the priestly office of our Lord Jesus Christ! The Bible teaches expressly that the Lord's Supper was ordained to be "a remembrance of Christ's body and blood," and not a sacrificial offering. The Bible teaches that Christ's substituted death on the cross was the *perfect* sacrifice for sin, which never needs to be *repeated*. Let us stand firm in these two great principles of the Christian faith. A clear understanding of the intention of the Lord's Supper is one of the soul's best safeguards against the delusions of false doctrine.

II. In the second place, let me try to show "WHO ought to receive the Lord's Supper?" What kind of people were meant to go to the Table and receive the Lord's Supper?

I will first show, **who ought NOT to be partakers of this ordinance**. The ignorance which prevails on this, as well as on every part of the subject, is vast, lamentable, and appalling. If I can contribute anything that may throw light upon it, I will feel very thankful. The principal giants whom John Bunyan describes, in "Pilgrim's Progress," as dangerous to Christian pilgrims, were two,

Pope and *Pagan*. If the good old Puritan had foreseen the times we live in, he would have said something about the giant *Ignorance*!

(a) It is *not* right to urge **all *professing* Christians** to go to the Lord's Table. There is such a thing as fitness and preparedness for the ordinance. It does not work like a medicine, independently of the state of mind of those who receive it. The teaching of those who urge all their congregation to come to the Lord's Table, as if the coming must necessarily do everyone good—is entirely without warrant of Scripture. No, rather, it is a teaching which is calculated to do immense harm to men's souls, and to turn the reception of the Lord's Supper into a mere *religious form*. *Ignorance* can never be the mother of acceptable worship, and an ignorant communicant who comes to the Lord's Table without knowing *why* he comes—is altogether in the wrong place!

"A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup." "Recognizing the body of the Lord,"—that is to understand what the elements of bread and wine represent, and why they are appointed, and what is the particular use of remembering Christ's death—is an essential qualification of a true communicant. God commands *all* people everywhere to *repent* and *believe* the Gospel (Acts 17:30), but He does not in the same way, or in the same manner, command everybody to come to the Lord's Table. No! this thing is not to be taken lightly, or carelessly! It is a solemn ordinance, and solemnly it ought to be used!

(b) But this is not all. **Sinners living in open sin**, and determined not to give it up, ought never to come to the Lord's Table. To do so is a positive insult to Christ, and to pour contempt on His Gospel. It is nonsense to profess we desire to remember Christ's death, while we cling to sin—the accursed thing which made it needful for Christ to die! The mere fact that a man is continuing in sin is clear evidence that he does not care for Christ, and feels no gratitude for the offer of redemption. The ignorant Roman Catholic who goes to the priest's confessional and receives absolution, may think he is fit to go to the Roman Catholic mass—and after mass may return to his sins. He never reads the Bible—and knows no better! But the professing Christian who habitually breaks any of God's commandments, and yet goes to the Lord's Table, as if it would do him good and wipe away his sins—is very guilty indeed. So long as he chooses to continue his wicked habits—he cannot receive the slightest benefit from the Lord's Table—and is only adding sin to sin! To carry unrepented sin to the Lord's Table, and there receive the bread and wine, knowing in our own hearts that we and wickedness are yet friends—is one of the worst things man can do, and one of the most hardening to the conscience. If a man must have his sins, and can't give them up, let him by all means stay away from the Lord's Supper! There is such a thing as "eating and drinking in an unworthy manner" and to our own "judgment." To no one do these words apply so thoroughly, as to an unrepentant sinner.

(c) Self-righteous people who think that they will be saved by their own works, have no business to come to the Lord's Table. Strange as it may sound at first, these people are the *least* qualified of all to receive the Lord's table. They may be outwardly correct, moral and respectable in their lives, but so long as they trust in their own goodness for salvation they are entirely in the wrong place at the Lord's Supper. For what do we declare at the Lord's Supper? We publicly profess that we have no goodness, righteousness, or worthiness of our own, and that all our hope is in Christ. We publicly profess that we are guilty, sinful, corrupt—and naturally deserve God's wrath and condemnation. We publicly profess that Christ's *merit* and not ours; Christ's *righteousness* and not ours—is the only cause why we look for acceptance with God. Now what has a self-righteous man to do with an ordinance like this? Clearly nothing at all.

One thing at any rate, is very clear: a self-righteous man has no business to receive the Lord's Supper. The Communion Service of the Church bids all communicants declare that "they do not presume to come to the Table trusting in their own righteousness, but in God's numerous and great mercies." It tells them to say, "We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under Your table," "the memory of our sins is grievous to us; the burden of them is intolerable." How many self-righteous professing Christians can ever go to the Lord's Table, and take these words into his mouth—is beyond my understanding! It only shows that many professing Christians use the "forms" of worship without taking the trouble to consider what they mean.

The plain truth is that the Lord's Supper was not meant for dead souls, but for living ones. The *careless*, the *ignorant*, the willfully *wicked*, the *self-righteous*, are no more fit to come to the Lord's Table than a dead corpse is fit to sit down at a king's feast! To enjoy a spiritual feast we must have a spiritual heart, and taste, and appetite. To suppose that the Lord's Table can do any good to an unspiritual man—is as foolish as to put bread and wine into the mouth of a dead person! The careless, the ignorant, and the willfully wicked, so long as they continue in that state, are utterly unfit to come to the Lord's Supper. To urge them to partake is not to do them good, but harm.

The Lord's Supper is not a *converting* or *justifying* ordinance. If a man goes to the Table unconverted or unforgiven, he will be *no better* when he comes away (actually *worse* due to the associated judgments for coming unworthily).

But, after all, the ground having been cleared of error, the question still remains to be answered, **Who are the sort of people who ought to receive the Lord's Supper?** I answer that by saying, people who have "examined themselves to see whether they have truly repented of their former sins, steadfastly purposing to lead a new life—have a true faith in God's mercy through Christ, with a thankful remembrance of His death—they are in love with all men."

In a word, I find that a worthy communicant is one who possesses three simple marks and qualifications—repentance, faith, and love. Does a man truly *repent* of sin and hate it? Does a man put his *trust* in Jesus Christ as his only hope of salvation? Does a man live in *love* towards others? He who can truly answer each of these questions, "I do," he is a man that is Scripturally qualified for the Lord's Supper. Let him come boldly. Let no barrier be put in his way. He comes up to the Bible standard of communicants. He may draw near with confidence, and feel assured that the great Master of the banquet is not displeased.

Such a man's **repentance** may be very much *imperfect*. Never mind! Is it real? Is he *truly* repentant? His **faith** in Christ may be very weak. Never mind! Is it real? A penny is as much true currency as is a one hundred dollar bill. His **love** may be very defective in quantity and degree. Never mind! Is it genuine? The grand test of a man's Christianity is not the *quantity* of holiness he has, but whether he has any true holiness all. The first twelve communicants, when Christ Himself gave the bread and wine, were weak indeed —weak in knowledge, weak in faith, weak in courage, weak in patience, weak in love! But eleven of them had something about them which outweighed all defects—they were real, genuine, sincere, and true!

Forever let this great principle be rooted in our minds—that the only worthy communicant is the man who has demonstrated *repentance* toward God, *faith* toward our Lord Jesus Christ, and practical *love* toward others. Are you that man? Then you may draw

near to the table, and take the ordinance to your comfort. Anything less than this I dare not change in my standard of a communicant. I will never encourage someone to receive the Lord's Supper—who is careless, ignorant, and self-righteous! I will never tell anyone to keep away until he is perfect, and to wait until his heart is as holy as an angel's. I will not do so, because I believe that neither my Master nor His Apostles would have done so. Show me a man that really feels his sins, really leans on Christ, really struggles to be holy—and I will welcome him in My Master's name. He may feel weak, erring, empty, feeble, doubting, wretched, and poor. But what does that matter? Paul, I believe, would have received him as a right communicant, and I will do likewise.

III. In the third place, let us consider "what BENEFIT communicants may expect to get by receiving the Lord's Supper." This is a point of grave importance, and one on which many mistakes abound. On no point, perhaps, connected with this ordinance are the views of Christians so vague and indistinct and undefined. One common idea among men is that "receiving the Lord's Supper must do them some good." Why, they can't explain. What good, they can't exactly say. But they have a loose general notion that it is the right thing to be a communicant, and that somehow or other it is of value to their souls! This is of course nothing better than ignorance. It is unreasonable to suppose that such communicants can please Christ, or receive any real benefit from what they do.

If there is any principle clearly laid down in the Bible about any act of religious worship, it is this that it must be with *understanding*. The worshiper must at least understand *something* about what he is doing. Mere bodily worship, unaccompanied by mind or heart—is utterly worthless. The man who eats the bread and drinks the wine, as a mere matter of form, because it is the "right" thing to do, without any clear idea of what it all means, derives no benefit. He might just as well stay at home!

Another common idea among men is that, "taking the Lord's Supper will help them get to heaven, and take away their sins." To this false idea you may trace up the habit in some churches of going to the Lord's Table once a year, in order, as an old farmer once said, "to wipe off the year's sins." To this idea again, you may trace the too common practice of *sending for a minister in time of sickness*, in order to receive the ordinance before death. Yes, how many take comfort about their relatives, after they have lived a most ungodly life, for no better reason than this, that they took the Lord's Supper when they were dying! Whether they repented and believed and had new hearts—they neither seem to know or care. All they know is that "they took the Lord's Supper before they died."

My heart sinks within me when I hear people resting on such evidence as this. Ideas like these are sad proofs of the ignorance which fills the minds of men about the Lord's Supper. They are ideas for which there is not the slightest warrant in Scripture. The sooner they are cast aside and given up—the better for the Church and the world. Let us settle it firmly in our minds—that the Lord's Supper was not given to be a means either of *justification* or of *conversion*. It was never meant to give grace—where there is no grace already; or to provide pardon—when pardon is not already enjoyed. It cannot possibly provide what is lacking, with the absence of repentance to God, and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ. It is an ordinance for the penitent, not for the impenitent; for the believing, not for the unbelieving; for the converted, not for the unconverted.

The unconverted man, who fancies that be can find a "shortcut" to heaven by taking the Lord's Supper, without treading the well-worn steps of *repentance* and faith—will find to his cost one day, that he is totally deceived! The Lord's Supper was meant to *increase* and help the grace that a man has—but not to *impart* the grace that he does not have. It was certainly never intended to make our peace with God, to justify, or to convert. The simplest statement of the benefit which a truehearted communicant may expect to receive from the Lord's Supper, is the strengthening and refreshing of our souls—clearer views of Christ and His atonement, clearer views of all the offices which Christ fills, as our Mediator and Advocate, clearer views of the complete redemption Christ has obtained for us by His substituted death on the cross, clearer views of our full and perfect acceptance in Christ before God, fresh reasons for deep repentance for sin, fresh reasons for lively faith—these are among the leading returns which a believer may confidently expect to get from his attendance at the Lord's Table. He who eats the bread and drinks the wine in a right spirit—will find himself drawn into closer communion with Christ, and will feel to know Him more, and understand Him better.

(a) Right reception of the Lord's Supper has a "**humbling**" effect on the soul. The sight of the bread and wine as emblems of Christ's body and blood, reminds us how sinful sin must be, if nothing less than the death of God's own Son could make satisfaction for it, or redeem us from its guilt. Never should we be so "clothed with humility," as when we receive the Lord's Supper.

(b) Right reception of the Lord's Supper has a "**cheering**" effect on the soul. The sight of the bread broken, and the wine poured out, reminds us how full, perfect, and complete is our salvation! Those vivid emblems remind us what an enormous price has been paid for our redemption. They press on us the mighty truth—that believing on Christ, we have nothing to fear, because a sufficient payment has been made for our debt. The "precious blood of Christ" answers every charge that can be brought against us. God can be "just and the one who justifies, those who have faith in Jesus" (Romans 3:26).

(c) Right reception of the Lord's Supper has a "**sanctifying**" effect on the soul. The bread and wine remind us how great is our debt of gratitude to our Lord, and how thoroughly we are bound to live for Him who died for our sins. They seem to say to us, "Remember what Christ has done for you—and ask yourself whether there is anything too great to do for Him!"

(d) Right reception of the Lord's Supper into hearts, has a "**restraining**" effect on the soul. Every time a believer receives the bread and the wine, he is reminded what a serious thing it is to be a Christian, and what an obligation is laid on him to lead a consistent life. Bought with such a price as that which the bread and wine call to his recollection, ought he not to glorify Christ in body and spirit, which are His? The man that goes regularly and intelligently to the Lord's Table finds it increasingly hard to yield to sin and conform to the world.

Such is a brief account of the benefits which a right-hearted communicant may expect to receive from the Lord's Supper. In eating that bread and drinking that cup, such a man will have his *repentance* deepened, his *faith* increased, his *knowledge* enlarged, his habit of *holy living* strengthened. He will realize more of the "real presence" of Christ in his heart. Eating, that bread by faith, he will feel closer communion with the body of Christ. Drinking that wine by faith, he will feel closer communion with the blood of Christ. *He will see more clearly what Christ is to him, and what he is to Christ.* He will understand more thoroughly what it is to be "one with Christ, and Christ one with him." He will feel the roots of his soul's spiritual life watered, and the work of grace in his heart established, built up, and carried forward.

All these things may seem and sound like foolishness to a natural man, but to a true Christian these things are light, and health, and life, and peace. No wonder that a true Christian finds the Lord's Supper a source of blessing! Remember, I do not pretend to say that all Christians experience the full blessing of the Lord's Supper, which I have just attempted to describe. Nor do I say that the same believer will always find his soul in the same spiritual frame, and always receive the same amount of benefit from the ordinance. But I boldly say this: you will rarely find a true believer who will not say that he believes the Lord's Supper is one of his best helps and highest privileges. He will tell you that if he were deprived of the Lord's Supper on a regular basis he would find the loss of it a great detriment to his soul. There are some things of which we never know the value of, until they are taken from us. So I believe it is with the Lord's Supper. The weakest and humblest of God's children gets a blessing from this ordinance, to an extent of which he is not aware.

IV. In the last place, I have to consider "why it is that so many *so-called* Christians never come to the Lord's Supper." It is a simple matter of fact, that myriads of people who *call* themselves Christians never come to the Table of the Lord. They would not endure to be told that they deny the faith, and are not in communion with Christ. When they worship, they attend a place of Christian worship; when they hear religious teaching, it is the teaching of Christianity; when they are married, they use a Christian service. Yet all this time they never come to the Lord's Supper! They often live on in this state of mind for many years, and to all appearance are not ashamed. They often die in this condition without ever having received the ordinance, and yet profess to feel hope at the last, and their friends express a hope about them. And yet they live and die in open disobedience to a plain command of Christ! These are simple facts. Let anyone look around him, and deny them if he can.

Now why is this? What explanation can we give? Our Lord Jesus Christ's last injunctions to His disciples are clear, plain, and unmistakable. He says to all, "Eat, drink: do this in remembrance of Me." Did He leave it to our discretion whether we would obey His injunction or not? Did He mean that it was not significant whether His disciples did or did not keep up the ordinance He had just established? Certainly not! The very idea is absurd, and one certainly never dreamed of in apostolic times. Paul evidently takes it for granted that every Christian would go to the Lord's Table when it was available. A class of Christian worshipers who never came to the Table, was a class whose existence was unknown to him.

What, then, are we to say of that number which fail to receive the Lord's Supper, unabashed, unhumbled, not afraid, not the least ashamed? Why is it? How is it? What does it all mean? Let us look these questions fairly in the face, and endeavor to give an answer to them.

(1) For one thing, many fail to go to the Table because they are utterly careless and thoughtless about true religion, and ignorant of very first principles of Christianity. They go to church, as a matter of form—but they neither know, nor care anything about what is done at church! Christianity has no place either in their hearts, or heads, or consciences, or wills, or understandings. It is a mere affair of "words and names," about which they know little—and have little concern. There were very few such false Christians in Paul's times, if indeed there were any. There are far too many in these last days of the world. They are the dead-weights of the Churches, and the scandal of Christianity. What such people need is light, knowledge, grace, a renewed conscience, a changed heart. In their present state they have no part of Christ; and dying in this state they are thrown into hell. Do I wish them to come to the Lord's Supper? Certainly not, till they are converted. No one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born again.

(2) For another thing, many *professing* Christians do not receive the Lord's Supper because they know they are living in the habitual practice of some sin, or in the neglect of some Christian duty. Their conscience tells them so long as they live in this state, and do not turn away from their sins, they are unfit to come to the Table of the Lord. Well, they are so far quite right! I wish no man to be a communicant if he cannot give up his sins. But I warn these people not to forget that if they are unfit for the Lord's Supper in that condition, they will be lost eternally. The same sins which disqualify them for the ordinance, most certainly disqualify them for heaven. Do I want them to come to the Lord's Supper as they are? Certainly not! But I do want them to repent and be converted, to cease to do evil, and to break off from their sins. Forever let it be remembered, that the man who is unfit for the Lord's Supper—is unfit to die!

(3) For another thing, some are not communicant because they imagine that it will add to their responsibility. They are not, as many, ignorant and careless about religion. They even attend church regularly and listen to the preaching of the gospel. But they say they dread coming to the Lord's Table and making a confession and a profession. They fear that they might afterwards fall away, and bring scandal on the cause of Christianity. They think it wisest to be on the *safe* side, and not commit themselves at all. Such people would do well to remember, that if they avoid responsibility of one kind by not coming to the Lord's Table, they incur responsibility of another kind, quite as grave, and quite as injurious to the soul. They are responsible for *open disobedience* to a command from of Christ. They are shrinking from doing that which their Master continually commands His disciples—confessing Him before men.

No doubt it is a serious step to come to the Lord's Table and receive the bread and the wine. It is a step that none should take lightly and without self-examination. But it is "no less a serious step to walk away and refuse the ordinance," when we remember Who invites us to receive it, and for what purpose it was appointed! I warn the people I am now dealing with—to be careful what they are doing. Let them not flatter themselves that *it can ever be a wise, a prudent, a safe line of conduct to neglect a plain command of Christ!* They may find at length, to their cost, that they have only increased their guilt and forsaken their mercies!

(4) For another thing, some false Christians stay away from the Lord's Supper because they believe they are not yet worthy. They wait and stand still, under the mistaken notion that no one is qualified for the Lord's Supper unless he feels within him, something like perfection. They pitch their idea of a communicant so high that they despair of attaining to it. Waiting for inward perfection they live, and waiting for it they die. Now such people would do well to understand that they are completely mistaken in their estimate of what "worthiness" really is.

They are forgetting that the Lord's Supper was not intended for *unsinning angels*, but for men and women subject to weakness, living in a world full of temptations, and needing mercy and grace every day they live! *A sense of our own utter unworthiness is the best worthiness that we can bring to the Lord's Table.* A deep feeling of our own entire indebtedness to Christ for all we have and hope for, is the best feeling we can bring with us. The people I now have in view, ought to consider seriously whether the ground they have

taken up is defensible. If they are waiting until they feel in themselves perfect hearts, perfect motives, perfect feelings, perfect repentance, perfect love, perfect faith—they will wait forever. There never were such communicants in any age—certainly not in the days of our Lord and of the Apostles—there never will be as long as the world stands. No, rather, the very thought that we feel literally worthy, is a symptom of secret self-righteousness, and proves us unfit for the Lord's Table in God's sight. Sinners we are, when we first are saved—sinners we will be—until we die! Converted, changed, renewed, sanctified—but sinners still (though not like before—sin is not the *pattern* of a believer's new life). In short, no man is really worthy to receive the Lord's Supper who does not deeply feel that he is a "miserable sinner."

(5) In the last place, some object going to the Lord's Table because they see others partaking who are not worthy, and not in a right state of mind. Because others eat and drink unworthily, they refuse to eat and drink at all. Of all the reasons taken up by those refusing to come to the Lord's Supper to justify their own neglect of Christ's ordinance, I must plainly say—I know none which seems to me so foolish, so weak, so unreasonable, and so unscriptural as this. It is as good as saying that we will never receive the Lord's Supper at all! When will we ever find a body of communicants on earth, of which all the members are converted and living perfect lives? It is setting up ourselves in the most unhealthy attitude of judging others. "Who are you, that you judge another person?" "What is that to you? You must follow me" (John 21:22). It is depriving ourselves of a great privilege, because others profane it and make a bad use of it. It is pretending to be wiser than our Master Himself. It is taking up ground for which there is no warrant in Scripture.

Paul rebukes the Corinthians sharply, for the irreverent behavior of some of the communicants; but I cannot find him giving a single hint that when some came to the Table unworthily, others ought to draw back or stay away. Let me advise the non-communicants I have now in view, to beware of being wise above that which was written. Let them study the parable of the Wheat and Tares, and mark how both were to "grow together *until* the harvest" (Matthew 13:30). Perfect Churches, perfect congregations, perfect bodies of communicants, are all unattainable in this world of confusion and sin. Let us covet the best gifts, and do all we can to check sin in others; but let us not starve our own selves, because others are ignorant sinners, and turn their food into poison. If others are foolish enough to eat and drink unworthily, let us not turn our backs on Christ's ordinance, and refuse to eat and drink at all.

Such are the five common excuses why myriads in the present day, though *professing* themselves Christians, never come to the Lord's Supper. One common remark may be made about them—there is not a single *reason* among the five, which deserves to be called "good," and which does not condemn the man who gives it. I challenge anyone to deny this. I have said repeatedly that I want no one to come to the Lord's Table who is not properly qualified. But I ask those who stay away never to forget that the very reasons they assign for their conduct, are their condemnation. I tell them that they stand convicted before God of either being very ignorant of what a communicant is, and what the Lord's Supper is; or else of being people who are not *living* right—and are unfit to *die*.

In short, to say, I am a noncommunicant, is as good as saying one of three things—

I am living in sin—and cannot come;

I know Christ commands me—but I will not obey Him;

I am an ignorant man—and do not understand what the Lord's Supper means.

I know not in what state of mind this book may find the reader of this paper, or what his opinions may be about the Lord's Supper. But I will *conclude* the whole subject by offering to all some **WARNINGS**, which I venture to think are highly required by the times.

(1) In the first place, "do not neglect" the Lord's Supper. The man who coolly and deliberately refuses to use an ordinance which the Lord Jesus Christ appointed for his profit—may be very sure that his soul is in a very wrong state. There is a judgment to come; there is an account to be rendered of all our conduct on earth. How any one can look forward to that judgment day, and expect to meet Christ with comfort and in peace, if he has refused all his life to commune with Christ at His Table, is a thing that I cannot understand. Does this hit home to you? Be careful what you are doing!

(2) In the second place, do not receive the Lord's Supper "carelessly, irreverently, and as a matter of form." The man who goes to the Lord's Table, and eats the bread and drinks the wine, while his heart is far away—is committing a great sin, and robbing himself of a great blessing. In receiving the Lord's Table, as in every other means of grace, everything depends on the state of mind and heart, in which the ordinance is used. He who draws near without repentance, faith, and love—and with a heart full of sin and the world—will certainly be nothing better, but rather worse! Does this hit home to you? Be careful what you are doing!

(3) In the third place, "do not make an idol" of the Lord's Supper. The man who tells you that it is the first, foremost, chief, and principal precept in Christianity, is telling you that which he will find it hard to prove. In the great majority of the books of the New Testament the Lord's Supper is not even named. In the letter to Timothy and Titus, about a minister's duties, the subject is not even mentioned. To repent and be converted, to believe and be holy, to be born again and have grace in our hearts—all these things are of far more importance than to be a communicant. Without them we cannot be saved. Without the Lord's Supper we can be saved. Are you tempted to make the Lord's Supper override and overshadow everything in Christianity, and place it above prayer and preaching? Be careful. Pay attention what you are doing!

(4) In the fourth place, "do not use the Lord's Supper irregularly." Never be absent when the Lord's Supper is administered. Make every effort to be in attendance. Regular habits are essential to the maintenance of the health of our bodies. Regular use of the Lord's Supper is essential to the well-being of our souls. The man who finds it a burden to attend on every occasion when the Lord's Table is spread, may well doubt whether all is right within him, and whether he is ready for the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. If Thomas had not been absent when the Lord appeared the first time to the assembled disciples, he would not have said the foolish things he did. Absence made him miss a blessing. Does this hit home to you? Be careful what you are doing!

(5) In the fifth place, "do not do anything to bring discredit" on your profession as a communicant. The man who after attending the Lord's Table runs into sin—does more harm perhaps than any unsaved sinner. *He is a walking sermon on behalf of the devil!* He gives opportunity to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme. He helps to keep people away from Christ. Lying, drinking, immoral, dishonest, selfish communicants—are the helpers of the devil, and the worst enemies of the Gospel. "For the grace of God

that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age!" Titus 2:11-12. Does this hit home to you? Be careful what you are doing!

(6) In the last place, "do not despair" and be cast down, if with all your desires you do not feel that you get a lot of good from the Lord's Supper. Very likely you are expecting too much. Very likely you are a poor judge of your own state. Your soul's *roots* may be strengthening and growing—while you *think* that you are not growing. Very likely you are forgetting that earth is not heaven, and that here we walk by *sight* and not by *faith*, and must expect nothing perfect. Lay these things to heart. Do not think harsh things about yourself without cause.

To every reader into whose hands this paper may fall, I commend the whole subject of it as deserving of serious and solemn consideration. I am nothing better than a poor or fallible man myself. But if I have made up my mind on any point it is this—that there is no truth which demands such plain speaking, as truth about the Lord's Supper!

The Real Presence—What Is It?

by J. C. Ryle

"If Your *Presence* does not go with us—do not send us up from here!" Exodus 33:15

There is a word in the text which heads this page which demands the attention of all English Christians in this day. That word is "presence." There is a religious subject bound up with that word, on which it is most important to have clear, distinct, and scriptural views. That subject is the "presence of God," and specially the "presence of our Lord Jesus Christ" with Christian people. What is that presence? Where is that presence? What is the nature of that presence? To these questions I propose to supply answers.

I. I shall consider, firstly—the general doctrine of *God's* presence in the world.

II. I shall consider, secondly—the special doctrine of Christ's real *spiritual* presence.

III. I shall consider, thirdly—the special doctrine of Christ's real *bodily* presence.

The whole subject deserves serious thoughts. If we suppose that this is a mere question of controversy, which only concerns theological partisans, we have yet much to learn. It is a subject which lies at the very roots of saving religion. It is a subject which is inseparably tied up with one of the most precious articles of the Christian faith. It is a subject about which it is most dangerous to be wrong. An error here may first lead a man to the Church of *Rome*, and then land him finally in the gulf of *infidelity*. Surely it is worth while to examine carefully the doctrine of the "presence" of God and of His Christ.

I. The first subject we have to consider is the general doctrine of GOD'S presence in the world. The teaching of the Bible on this point is clear, plain, and unmistakable. *God is everywhere!* There is no place in heaven or earth, where He is not. There is no place in air or land or sea, no place above ground or under ground, no place in town or country, no place in Europe, Asia, Africa, or America—where God is not always present. Enter into your closet and lock the door—God is there. Climb to the top of the highest mountain, where not even an insect moves—God is there. Sail to the most remote island in the Pacific Ocean, where the foot of man never trod—God is there. He is always near us—seeing, hearing, observing; knowing every action, and deed, and word, and whisper, and look, and thought, and motive, and secret of everyone of us—wherever we are.

What says the Scripture? It is written in Job, "His eyes watch over a man's ways, and He observes all his steps. There is no darkness, no deep darkness, where evildoers can hide themselves!" (Job 34:21, 22). It is written in Proverbs, "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good!" (Proverbs 15:3). It is written in Jeremiah, "Great are your purposes and mighty are your deeds. Your eyes are open to all the ways of men; you reward everyone according to his conduct and as his deeds deserve!" (Jer. 32:19).

It is written in the Psalms, "O Lord, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I *rise*; you perceive my *thoughts* from afar. You discern my *going out* and my *lying down*; you are familiar with *all my ways*. Before a *word* is on my tongue you know it completely, O Lord. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain! Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens—you are there; if I make my bed in the depths—you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea—even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast. If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me," even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you!" (Psalm 139:1-12).

Such language as this, confounds and overwhelms us. The doctrine before us is one which we cannot fully understand. Precisely so. David said the same thing about it almost three thousand years ago. "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain!" (Psalm 139:6). But it does not follow that the doctrine is not true—because we cannot understand it. It is the weakness of our poor minds and intellects which we must blame—and not the doctrine. There are scores of things in the world around us, which few can understand or explain—yet no sensible man refuses to believe. How this earth is ever rolling round the sun with enormous swiftness, while we feel no motion—how the moon affects the tides, and makes them rise and fall twice every twenty-four hours—how millions of perfectly organized living creatures exist in every drop of pond-water, which our naked eye cannot see—all these are things well known to men of science, while most of us could not explain them for our lives. And shall we, in the face of such facts, presume to doubt that God is everywhere present, for no better reason than this—that we cannot understand it? Let us never dare to say so again.

How many things there are about God Himself which we cannot possibly understand, and yet we must believe them, unless we are so

senseless as to be atheists! Who can explain the *eternity* of God, the infinite *power* and *wisdom* of God, or the works of God in *creation* and *providence*? Who can comprehend a Being who is a *Spirit*, without body, parts, or passions? How can a material creature, who can only be in one place at one time, take in the idea of an *immaterial* Being, who existed before creation, who formed this world by His word out of nothing—and who can be everywhere and see everything at one and the same time! Where, in a word, is there a single attribute of God, which mortal man can thoroughly comprehend?

Where, then, is the common sense or wisdom of refusing to believe the doctrine of God being present everywhere, merely because our minds cannot take it in? Well says the Book of Job, "Can you fathom the *mysteries* of God? Can you probe the *limits* of the Almighty? They are higher than the heavens--what can you do? They are deeper than the depths of hell--what can you know?"(Job 11:7, 8). Let us have high and honorable thoughts of the God with whom we have to do while we live, and before whose bar we must stand when we die. Let us seek to have just notions of His power, His wisdom, His eternity, His holiness, His perfect knowledge, His "presence" everywhere.

One half the sin committed by mankind, arises from wrong views of their Maker and Judge. Men are reckless and wicked, because they do not think that God sees them. They do things they would never do—if they really believed they were under the eyes of the Almighty God! It is written, "You thought that I was altogether such an one as yourself" (Psalm 1:21). It is written again, "They say, 'The Lord doesn't see it! The God of Jacob doesn't pay attention!' Is the one who made your ears deaf? Is the one who formed your eyes blind? He punishes the nations—won't he also punish you? He knows everything—doesn't he also know what you are doing?" (Psalm 94:7-10).

No wonder that holy Job said in his best moments, "When I consider, I am afraid of Him" (Job 23:15). "What is your God like? "said a sneering infidel one day to a poor Christian. "What is this God of yours like—this God about whom you make such ado? Is He great or is He small?" "My God," was the wise reply, "is a great and a small God at the same time—so great that the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him—and yet so small that He can dwell in the heart of a poor sinner like me."

"Where is your God, my boy?" said an infidel to a child whom he saw coming out of a church. "Where is your God about whom you have been reading? Show Him to me, and I will give you a treat." "Show me where He is not," was the answer, "and I will give you two! My God is everywhere!" Well is it said that, "God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty." "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings You have perfected praise" (1 Cor.1:27; Matt. 2116).

However hard it is to comprehend this doctrine—it is one which is most useful and wholesome for our souls. To keep continually in mind—that God is always present with us; to live always as in God's sight; to act and speak and think as always under His eye—all this is eminently calculated to have a good effect upon our souls. Wide, and deep, and searching, and piercing is the influence of that one thought, "You are the God who sees me!" (Genesis 16:13)

(a) The thought of God's presence—is a loud call to humility. How much which is evil and defective must the *all-seeing eye* —see in everyone of us! How small a part of our character is really known by man! "Man looks on the outward appearance—but the Lord looks on the heart!" (1 Sam. 16:7). Man does not always see us—but the Lord is always looking at us—morning, noon, and night! Who has not need to say, "God be merciful to me a sinner!"

(b) The thought of God's presence—is a crushing proof of our need of Jesus Christ. What hope of salvation could we have if there was not a *Mediator* between God and man? Before the eye of the ever-present God—our best righteousness is filthy rags—and our best doings are full of imperfection! Where would we be—if there was not a fountain open for all sin—even the blood of Christ! Without Christ—the prospect of death, judgment, and eternity would drive us to despair!

(c) The thought of God's presence—teaches *the folly of hypocrisy* in religion. What can be more silly and childish—than to wear a mere cloak of Christianity, while we inwardly cleave to sin, when God is ever looking at us and sees us through and through? It is easy to deceive ministers and fellow- Christians, because they often see us only upon Sundays. But God sees us morning, noon, and night, and cannot be deceived. Oh, whatever we are in religion—let us be real and true!

(d) The thought of God's presence—is a check and curb on the inclination to sin. The recollection that there is One who is always near us and observing us, who will one day have a reckoning with all mankind—may well keep us back from evil! Happy are those sons and daughters who, when they leave the family home, and launch forth into the world, carry with them the abiding remembrance of God's eye. "My father and mother do not see me—but God does!" This was the feeling which preserved Joseph when tempted in a foreign land: "How can I do this great wickedness—and sin against God!" (Gen. 39:9).

(e) The thought of God's presence—is a spur to the pursuit of true holiness. The highest standard of sanctification is to *"walk with God"* as Enoch did, and to *"walk before God"* as Abraham did. Where is the man who would not strive to live so as to please God —if he realized that God was always standing at his elbow! To get *away* from God—is the secret aim of the sinner. To get *nearer* to God—is the longing desire of the saint. The real servants of the Lord are "a people near unto Him" (Psalm 148:14).

(f) The thought of God's presence—is a comfort in time of public calamity. When *war* and *famine* and *pestilence* break in upon a land, when the nations are torn by inward divisions, and all order seems in peril—it is cheering to reflect that God sees and knows and is close at hand—that the King of kings is near, and is not asleep. He who saw the Spanish Armada sail to invade England, and scattered it with the breath of His mouth! He who looked on when the schemers of the Gunpowder Plot were planning the destruction of Parliament; this God is not changed.

(g) The thought of God's presence—is a strong consolation in private trial. We may be driven from home and native land—and placed at the other side of the world; we may be bereaved of wife and children and friends—and left alone in our family, like the last tree in a forest. But we can never go to any place where God is not; and under no circumstances can we be left entirely alone.

Such thoughts as these, are useful and profitable for us all. That man must be in a poor state of soul, who does not feel them to be so. Let it be a settled principle in our religion—never to forget that in every condition and place—that we are under the eye of God! It need not frighten us—if we are true believers. The *sins of all believers* are cast behind God's back—and even the all-seeing God sees no spot in them! It ought to *cheer* us—if our Christianity is genuine and sincere. We can then appeal to God with confidence, like David, and

say, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life!"(Psalm 139:23, 24). Great is the mystery of *God's presence everywhere*; but the true man of God can look at it without fear.

II. The second thing which I propose to consider—is the real SPIRITUAL presence of our Lord Jesus Christ. In considering this branch of our subject, we must carefully remember that we are speaking of One who is both God and man in one Person. We are speaking of One who in infinite love to our souls—took man's nature, and was born of the Virgin Mary, was crucified, dead, and buried—to be a sacrifice for sins, and yet never ceased for a moment to be fully God. The peculiar "presence" of this blessed Person, our Lord Jesus Christ, with His Church, is the point which I want to unfold in this part of my paper. I want to show that He is really and truly present with His believing people, spiritually—and that His presence is one of the grand privileges of a true Christian. What then is the real spiritual "presence" of Christ, and wherein does it consist? Let us see!

(a) There is a real spiritual presence of Christ with that CHURCH which is His mystical body—the blessed company of all faithful people. This is the meaning of that parting saying of our Lord to His Apostles, "I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 27:20). To the *visible* Church of Christ—that saying did *not* strictly belong. Torn by divisions, defiled by heresies, disgraced by superstitions and corruptions, the visible Church has often given mournful proof that Christ does not always dwell in it! Many of its branches in the course of years, like the Churches of Asia, have decayed and passed away!

Christ's special presence, is with the *universal*, *invisible* Church, composed of God's elect—the Church of which every member is truly sanctified, the Church of believing and penitent men and women—this is the Church to which alone, strictly speaking, the promise belongs! This is the Church in which there is always a real spiritual "presence" of Christ.

There is not a *visible* Church on earth, however ancient and well ordered—which is secure against falling away. Scripture and history alike testify that, like the Jewish Church—it may become corrupt, and depart from the faith—and departing from the faith, it may die. And why is this? Simply because Christ has never promised to any *visible* Church that He will be with it always, even unto the end of the world. The word that He inspired Paul to write to the Roman Church—is the same word that He sends to every visible Church throughout the world, whether Episcopal, Presbyterian, or Congregational: "Be not high-minded, but fear! Continue in God's goodness, otherwise you also shall be cut off!" (Romans 9:20-22).

On the other hand, the perpetual presence of Christ with that *universal*, *invisible* Church, which is His body—is the great secret of its continuance and security! It lives on, and cannot die, because Jesus Christ is in the midst of it! It is a ship tossed with storm and tempest—but it cannot sink, because Christ is on board! Its members may be persecuted, oppressed, imprisoned, robbed, beaten, beheaded, or burned—but His true Church is never extinguished. It lives on through fire and flood! When crushed in one land—it springs up in another. The Pharaohs, the Herods, the Neros, the Julians, the *bloody Marys*, have labored in vain to destroy this Church. They slay their thousands—and then they go to their own eternal destiny! The true Church outlives them all. It is a bush which is often burning, and yet is never consumed. And what is the reason of all this? It is the perpetual "presence "of Jesus Christ with His people!

(b) There is a real spiritual "presence" of Christ in *the heart of every true believer*. This is what Paul meant, when he speaks of "Christ dwelling in the heart by faith" (Ephes. 3:17). This is what our Lord meant when He says of the man who loves Him and keeps His Word, that "We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him" (John 14:23). In every believer, whether high or low, or rich or poor, or young or old, or feeble or strong—the Lord Jesus dwells, and keeps up His work of grace by the power of the Holy Spirit. As He dwells in the whole Church, which is His *body*—keeping, guarding, preserving, and sanctifying it—so does He continually dwell in every *member* of that body—in the least as well as in the greatest.

This "presence" is the secret of all that peace, and hope, and joy, and comfort, which believers feel. All spring from their having a *Divine tenant* within their hearts. This "presence "is the secret of their continuance in the faith, and perseverance unto the end. In themselves, they are weak and unstable as water. But they have within them, One who is "able to save to the uttermost," and will not allow His work to be overthrown. Not one bone of Christ's mystical body shall ever be broken! Not one Lamb of Christ's flock shall ever be plucked out of His hand! The heart in which Christ is pleased to dwell, though it is but very weak--is one which the devil shall never break into and make his own!

(c) There is a real spiritual "presence" of Christ *wherever His believing people meet* together in His name. This is the plain meaning of His famous saying, "Wherever two or three are gathered together in My name—there I am in the midst of them!" (Matt. 18:20). The *smallest* gathering of true Christians for the purposes of prayer or praise, or holy conference, or reading God's Word—is sanctified by *the best of company!* The *great* or *rich* or *noble* may not be there—but the *King of kings Himself* is present—and angels look on with reverence!

The grandest buildings that men have reared for religious uses, are often no better than whitened sepulchers—destitute of any holy influence—because they are given up to superstitious ceremonies, and filled to no purpose with crowds of *formal* worshipers, who come unfeeling, and go unfeeling away. No worship is of any use to souls—at which *Christ* is not present! Incense, banners, pictures, flowers, crucifixes, and long processions of richly dressed ecclesiastics—are a poor substitute for the great High Priest Himself!

The poorest room where a few penitent believers assemble in the name of Jesus—is a consecrated and most holy place in the sight of God! Those who worship God in spirit and truth—never draw near to Him in vain. Often they go home from such meetings warmed, cheered, established, strengthened, comforted, and refreshed. And what is the *secret* of their feelings? They have had with them *the great Master of assemblies—Jesus Christ Himself!*

(d) There is a real spiritual "presence" of Christ with the hearts of all true-hearted communicants in the *Lord's Supper*. Rejecting as I do, with all my heart, the baseless notion of any bodily presence of Christ in the Lord's table, I can never doubt that the great ordinance appointed by Christ has a special and peculiar blessing attached to it. That blessing, I believe, consists in a *special* and *peculiar* presence of Christ, given to the heart of every believing communicant. That truth appears to me to lie under those wonderful words of institution, "Take and eat it—for this is My body." "Drink from it, all of you—for this is My blood." Those

words were never meant to teach that the bread in the Lord's Supper was literally Christ's body, or the wine literally Christ's blood. But our Lord did mean to teach that every right-hearted believer, who ate that bread and drank that wine in remembrance of Christ, would in so doing—find a special presence of Christ in his heart, and a special revelation of Christ's sacrifice of His own body and blood to his soul.

In a word, there is a special spiritual "presence" of Christ in the Lord's supper, which they only know—who are faithful communicants, and which those who are not communicants, miss altogether. After all, the experience of all the best servants of Christ is the best proof that there is a special blessing attached to the Lord's Supper. You will rarely find a true believer, who will not say that he reckons this ordinance to be one of his greatest helps and highest privileges. He will tell you that if he was deprived of it, he would find the loss of it a great drawback to his soul. He will tell you that in eating that bread, and drinking that cup, he realizes something of *Christ dwelling in him*; and finds his repentance deepened, his faith increased, his knowledge enlarged, his graces strengthened.

Eating the bread with faith—he feels closer communion with the body of Christ. Drinking the wine with faith—he feels closer communion with the blood of Christ. *He sees more clearly what Christ is to him—and what he is to Christ.* He understands more thoroughly what it is—to be one with Christ and Christ in him. He feels the *roots of his spiritual life* insensibly watered, and the work of grace within him insensibly built up and carried forward. He cannot explain or define it. It is a matter of experience, which no one knows but he who feels it. And the true explanation of the whole matter is this—there is a special and spiritual "presence" of Christ in the ordinance of the Lord's Supper. Jesus meets those who draw near to His table with a true heart—in a special and peculiar way!

(e) Last—but not least, there is a real spiritual "presence" of Christ, given to believers in special times of trouble and difficulty. This is the presence of which Paul received assurance on more than one occasion. At Corinth, for instance, it is written, "Then the Lord said to Paul in a night vision—Don't be afraid, but keep on speaking and don't be silent. For *I am with you*, and no one will lay a hand on you to hurt you, because I have many people in this city!" (Acts 18:9, 10). At Jerusalem, again, when the Apostle was in danger of his life, it is written, "The following night, the Lord stood by him and said—Have courage! For as you have testified about Me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome!" (Acts 23:11). Again, in the last epistle Paul wrote, we find him saying, "At my first defense, no one came to my assistance, but everyone deserted me. May it not be counted against them. But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth!" (2 Tim. 4:16, 17).

This *special presence of Christ with His people*—is the reason for the singular and miraculous courage which many of God's children have occasionally shown under circumstances of unusual trial, in every age of the Church. When the three Hebrew children were cast into the fiery furnace, and preferred to die, rather than commit idolatry, we are told that Nebuchadnezzar exclaimed, "Look! I see *four* men, not tied, walking around in the fire unharmed; and the fourth looks like a Son of God!" (Dan. 3:25). When Stephen was beset by bloody-minded enemies on the very point of stoning him, we read that he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God!" (Acts 7:56).

Nor ought we to doubt that this *special presence* was the secret of the fearlessness with which many early Christian martyrs met their deaths, and of the marvelous courage which the Marian martyrs, such as Bradford, Latimer, and Rogers, displayed at the stake. A peculiar sense of Christ being with them, is the right explanation of all these cases. These men died as they did—because Christ was with them. Nor ought any believer to fear that the same helping presence will be with him—whenever his own time of *special need* arrives.

Many believers are *overly anxious* about what they shall do in their last sickness, and on the bed of death. Many disquiet themselves with anxious thoughts—as to what they would do if husband or wife died, or if they were suddenly turned out of house and home. Let us believe that *when the need comes—the help will come also.* Let us not carry our crosses—before they are laid upon us! He who said to Moses, *"Certainly I will be with you!"* will never fail any believer who cries to Him. When the hour of *special storm* comes, the Lord who walks upon the waters will come and say, "Peace! Be still." There are thousands of doubting saints continually crossing the *river of death*, who go down to the water in fear and trembling, and yet are able at last to say with David, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil—for *You are with me!"* (Psalm 23:4).

This branch of our subject deserves to be pondered well. This spiritual presence of Christ is a real and true thing, though a thing which the children of this world neither know—nor understand. It is precisely one of those matters of which Paul writes, "The natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God—for they are foolishness unto him" (1 Cor. 2:14). But for all that, I repeat emphatically, that the spiritual presence of Christ—His presence with the hearts and spirits of His own people—is a real and true thing. Let us not doubt it. Let us hold it fast. Let us seek to feel it more and more. The man who feels nothing whatever of it in his own heart's experience, may depend on it that he is not yet in a right state of soul.

III. The last point which I propose to consider is the real BODILY presence of our Lord Jesus Christ. Where is it? What ought we to think about it? What ought we to reject, and what ought we to hold fast? This is a branch of my subject on which it is most important to have clear and well-defined views. There are rocks around it on which many are making shipwreck. No doubt there are deep things and difficulties connected with it. But this must not prevent our examining it as far as possible by the light of Scripture. Whatever the Bible teaches plainly about Christ's bodily presence—it is our duty to hold and believe. To shrink from holding it—because we cannot reconcile it with some human tradition, some minister's teaching, or some early prejudice imbibed in youth—is presumption, and not humility. To the law and to the testimony! What do the Scriptures say about Christ's bodily presence? Let us examine the matter step by step.

(a) There was a bodily presence of our Lord Jesus Christ during the time when He was upon EARTH at His first advent. For thirty-three years, between His birth and His ascension, He was present in a body in this world. In infinite mercy to our souls, the eternal Son of God was pleased to take our nature on Him, and to be miraculously born of a woman, with a body just like our own. He was made like unto us in all things, sin only excepted. Like us He grew from infancy to boyhood, and from boyhood to youth, and from youth to manhood. Like us He ate, and drank, and slept, and hungered, and thirsted, and wept, and felt fatigue and pain. He had a body which was subject to all the conditions of a material body. While, as God, He was in heaven and earth at the same time; as man, His body was only in one place at one time. When He was in Galilee He was not in Judea, and when He was in Capernaum He was not in Jerusalem. In a real, true human body He lived; in a real, true human body He kept the law, and fulfilled

all righteousness; and in a real, true human body He bore our sins on the cross, and made satisfaction for us by His atoning blood. He who died for us on Calvary was perfect man, while at the same time He was perfect God.

This was the first real bodily presence of Jesus Christ. The truth before us is full of unspeakable comfort to all who have an awakened conscience, and know the value of their souls. It is a heart-cheering thought that the "one Mediator between God and man is the man Jesus Christ." He was *real man*—and so able to be touched with the feeling of our infirmities. He was *Almighty God*—and so able to save to the uttermost, all who come to the Father by Him. The Savior in whom the laboring and heavy-leaden are invited to trust, is One who had a real body when He was working out our redemption on earth. It was no angel, nor spirit, that stood in our place and became our Substitute, that finished the work of redemption, and did what Adam failed to do. No! it was one who was real man! "By man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead" (1 Cor. 15:21).

The battle was fought for us, and the victory was won by the eternal Word made flesh—by the real bodily presence among us of Jesus Christ. Forever let us praise God that Christ did not remain in heaven—but came into the world and was made flesh to save sinners; that in the body, He was born for us, lived for us, died for us, and rose again. Whether men know it or not, our whole hope of eternal life hinges on the simple fact, that nineteen hundred years ago there was a real bodily presence of the Son of God for us on the earth. Let us now go a step further.

(b) There is a real bodily presence of Jesus Christ in HEAVEN at the right hand of God. This is a deep and mysterious subject, beyond question. What God the Father is, and where He dwells, what the nature of His dwelling-place who is a Spirit—these are high things which we have no comprehension to take in. But where the Bible speaks plainly—it is our duty and our wisdom to believe. When our Lord rose again from the dead, He rose with a real human body—a body which could not be in two places at once—a body of which the angels said, "He is not here—but is risen" (Luke 24:6). In that body, having finished His redeeming work on earth, He ascended visibly into heaven. He took His body with Him, and did not leave it behind, like Elijah's mantle. It was not laid in the grave at last, and did not become dust and ashes in some Syrian village, like the bodies of saints and martyrs. The same body which walked in the streets of Capernaum, and sat in the house of Mary and Martha, and was crucified on Golgotha, and was laid in Joseph's tomb—that same body—after the resurrection glorified undoubtedly—but still real and material—was taken up into heaven, and is there at this very moment.

To use the inspired words of the Acts, "While they beheld, He was taken up; and a cloud received Him out of their sight" (Acts 1:9). To use the words of Luke's Gospel, "While He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven" (Luke 24:51). To use the words of Mark, "After the Lord had spoken unto them, He was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God" (Mark 16:19). The fourth Article of the Church of England states the whole matter fully and accurately: "Christ did truly rise again from death, and took again His body, with flesh, bones, and all things appertaining to the perfection of man's nature wherewith He ascended into heaven, and there sits, until He return to judge all men at the last day." And thus, to come round to the point with which we started—there is in heaven a real bodily presence of Jesus Christ.

The doctrine before us is singularly rich in comfort and consolation to all true Christians. That Divine Savior in heaven, on whom the Gospel tells us to cast the burden of our sinful souls, is not a Being who is *Spirit* only—but a Being who is *man*—as well as *God*. He is One who has taken up to heaven a body like our own; and in that body sits at the right hand of God, to be our Priest and our Advocate, our Representative and our Friend. He can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, because He has suffered Himself in the body being tempted. He knows by experience all that the body is liable to—from pain, and weariness, and hunger, and thirst, and work; and has taken to heaven that very body which endured the contradiction of sinners and was nailed to the tree!

Who can doubt that that body in heaven is a continual plea for believers, and renders them ever acceptable in the Father's sight? It is a perpetual remembrance of the perfect atoning sacrifice made for us upon the cross. God will not forget that our debts are paid for, so long as the body which paid for them with life-blood is in heaven before His eyes. Who can doubt that when we pour out our petitions and prayers before the throne of grace, we put them in the hand of One whose sympathy passes knowledge? None can feel for poor believers wrestling here in the body—like Him who in the body sits pleading for them in heaven. Forever let us bless God that there is a real bodily presence of Christ in heaven. Let us now go a step further.

(c) There is NO real bodily presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper, or in the consecrated elements of bread and wine. This is a point which it is peculiarly painful to discuss, because it has long divided Christians into two parties, and defiled a very solemn subject with sharp controversy. Nevertheless, it is one which cannot possibly be avoided in handling the question we are considering. Moreover, it is a point of vast importance, and demands very plain speaking.

Those amiable and well-meaning people who imagine that it signifies little, what opinion people hold about Christ's presence in the Lord's Supper—that it is a matter of indifference, and that it all comes to the same thing at last—are totally and entirely mistaken. They have yet to learn that an unscriptural view of the subject may land them at length in a very dangerous heresy. Let us search and see.

My reason for saying that there is no bodily presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper, or in the consecrated bread and wine, is simply this: there is no such presence taught anywhere in Holy Scripture. It is a presence that can never be honestly and fairly gotten out of the Bible. Let the three accounts of the institution of the Lord's Supper, in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and the one given by Paul to the Corinthians, be weighed and examined impartially, and I have no doubt as to the result. They teach that the Lord Jesus, in the same night that He was betrayed, took bread, and gave it to His disciples, saying, "Take and eat it; this is My body;" and also took the cup of wine, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood ."

But there is nothing in the simple narrative, or in the verses which follow it, which shows that the disciples thought their Master's body and blood were really present in the bread and wine which they received. There is not a word in the epistles to show that after our Lord's ascension into heaven, that the Christians believed that His body and blood were present in an ordinance celebrated on earth; or that the bread in the Lord's Supper, after consecration, was not truly and literally bread, and the wine truly and literally wine.

Some people, I am aware, suppose that such texts as "This is My body," and "This is My blood," are proofs that Christ's body and

blood, in some mysterious manner, are locally present in the bread and wine at the Lord's Supper, after their consecration. But a man must be easily satisfied if such texts content him. The quotation of a single isolated phrase is a mode of arguing which would establish Arianism or Socinianism.

The *context* of these famous expressions shows clearly, that those who heard the words used, and were accustomed to our Lord's mode of speaking, understood them to mean "This *represents* My body," and "This *represents* my blood." The comparison of other places proves that there is nothing unfair in this interpretation. It is certain that the words "is" and "are" frequently mean represent in Scripture. The disciples, no doubt, remembered their Master saying such things as "The *field* is the world, the *good seed* are the children of the kingdom" (Matt. 13:38). Paul, in writing on the Sacrament, confirms this interpretation by expressly calling the consecrated bread, "bread," and not the body of Christ, no less than three times (1 Cor. 11:26-28).

Some people, again, regard the sixth chapter of John, where our Lord speaks of "eating His flesh and drinking His blood," as a proof that there is a literal bodily presence of Christ in the bread and wine at the Lord's Supper. But there is an utter absence of conclusive proof that this chapter refers to the Lord's Supper at all! The Lord's Supper had not been instituted, and did not exist, until at least a year after these words were spoken. Enough to say, that the great majority of Protestant commentators altogether deny that the chapter refers to the Lord's Supper, and that even some Romish commentators on this point agree with them. The eating and drinking here spoken of are the eating and drinking of *faith*—and not a *bodily* action.

Some people fancy that Paul's words to the Corinthians, "The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" (1 Cor. 10:16), are enough to prove a bodily presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper. But unfortunately for their argument, Paul does not say, "The bread is the body," but the "communion of the body." And the obvious sense of the words is this: "The bread that a worthy communicant eats in the Lord's Supper is a means whereby his soul holds communion with the body of Christ." Nor do I believe that more than this can be got out of the words. Above all, there remains the unanswerable argument, that if our Lord was actually holding His own body in His hands, when He said of the bread, "This is My body," His body must have been a different body to that of ordinary men. Of course if His body was not a body like ours, His real and proper "humanity" is at an end. At this rate the blessed and comfortable doctrine of Christ's entire sympathy with His people, arising from the fact that He is really and truly man, would be completely overthrown and fall to the ground.

Finally, if the body with which our blessed Lord ascended up into heaven can be in heaven, and on earth, and on ten thousand communion-tables at one and the same time—it cannot be a real human body at all. Yet that He did ascend with a real human body, although a glorified body, is one of the prime articles of the Christian faith, and one that we ought never to let go! Once admit that a body can be present in two places at once, and you cannot prove that it is a body at all. Once admit that Christ's body can be present at God's right hand and on the communion-table at the same moment, and it cannot be the body which was born of the Virgin Mary and crucified upon the cross. From such a conclusion we may well draw back with horror and dismay!

Well says the Prayer-book of the Church of England: "The sacramental bread and wine remain still in their very natural substances, and therefore may not be *adored* (for that is idolatry, to be abhorred by all faithful Christians); and the natural body and blood of our Savior Christ are in heaven, and not here; it being against the truth of Christ's natural body to be at one time in more places than one." This is sound speech that cannot be condemned. Well would it be for the Church of England if all Churchmen would read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest what the Prayer-book teaches about Christ's presence in the Lord's Supper. If we love our souls and desire their prosperity, let us be very jealous over our doctrine about the Lord's Supper. Let us stand fast on the simple teaching of Scripture, and let no one drive us from it, under the pretense of increased reverence for the ordinance of Christ.

Let us take heed, lest under confused and mystical notions of some inexplicable presence of Christ's body and blood under the form of bread and wine, we find ourselves unawares heretics about Christ's human nature. Next to the doctrine that Christ is not God—but only man, there is nothing more dangerous than the doctrine that Christ is not man—but only God. If we would not fall into that pit, we must hold firmly that there can be no literal presence of Christ's body in the Lord's Supper; because His body is in heaven, and not on earth, though as God He is everywhere. Let us now go one step further, and bring our whole subject to a *conclusion*.

(d) There will be a real bodily presence of Christ when He COMES AGAIN the second time to judge the world. This is a point about which the Bible speaks so plainly, that there is no room left for dispute or doubt. When our Lord had ascended up before the eyes of His disciples, the angels said to them, "This same Jesus, who is taken up from you into heaven—shall so come in like manner as you have seen Him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11).

There can be no mistake about the meaning of these words. Visibly and bodily our Lord left the world, and visibly and bodily He will return in the day which is emphatically called the day of "His appearing" (1 Peter 1:7). The world is not yet done with Christ. Myriads talk and think of Him as of One who did His work in the world and passed on to His own place, like some statesman or philosopher, leaving nothing but His memory behind Him. The world will be fearfully undeceived one day. That same Jesus who came nineteen centuries ago in lowliness and poverty, to be despised and crucified—shall come again one day in power and glory, to raise the dead and change the living, and to reward every man according to his works!

The **wicked** shall see that Savior whom they despised—but too late, and shall call on the rocks to fall on them and hide them from the face of the Lamb! Those solemn words which Jesus addressed to the High Priest the night before His crucifixion shall at length be fulfilled: "You shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven" (Matt. 26:64).

The **godly** shall see the Savior whom they have read of, heard of, and believed, and find, like the Queen of Sheba—that the half of His goodness had not been known! They shall find that *sight* is far better than *faith*, and that in Christ's actual presence is fullness of joy. This is the real bodily presence of Christ, for which every true-hearted Christian ought daily to long and pray.

Happy are those who make it an article of their faith, and live in the constant expectation of a second personal advent of Christ. Then, and then only—will the devil be bound, the curse be taken off the earth, the world be restored to its original purity, sickness and death be taken away, tears be wiped from all eyes, and the redemption of the saint, in body as well as soul, be completed. "It does not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is!" (1 John 3:2). The highest style of Christian is the man who desires the real presence of his Master, and "loves His appearing" (2 Tim. 4:8).

I have now unfolded, as far as I can in a short paper, the truth about the presence of God and His Christ. I have shown:

(1) the general doctrine of *God's* presence everywhere;

(2) the Scriptural doctrine of Christ's real, *spiritual* presence;

(3) the Scriptural doctrine of Christ's real, *bodily* presence.

I now leave the whole subject with a parting word of **APPLICATION**, and commend it to serious attention. In an age of hurry and bustle about secular things, in an age of wretched strife and controversy about religion—I entreat men not to neglect the great truths which these pages contain.

(1) What do we know of Christ, for ourselves? We have heard of Him thousands of times. We call ourselves Christians. But what do we know of Christ experimentally, as our own personal *Savior*, our own *Priest*, our own *Friend*, the *Healer* of our conscience, the *Comforter* of our heart, the *Pardoner* of our sins, the *Foundation* of our hope, the *confidence* of our souls? How is it?

(2) Let us not rest until we feel Christ "present" in our own hearts, and know what it is to be one with Christ and Christ in us. This is real religion. To live in the habit of looking *backward* to Christ on the cross, *upward* to Christ at God's right hand, and *forward* to Christ coming again—this is the only Christianity which gives comfort in life, and good hope in death. Let us remember this.

(3) Let us beware of holding erroneous views about the Lord's Supper, and especially about the real nature of Christ's "presence" in it. Let us not so mistake that blessed ordinance, which was meant to be our soul's food—as to turn it into our soul's poison! There is no sacrifice in the Lord's Supper, no sacrificing priest, no altar, no bodily "presence" of Christ in the bread and wine. These things are not in the Bible, and are dangerous inventions of man, leading on to superstition! Let us take care.

(4) Let us keep continually before our minds, the second advent of Christ, and that real "presence "which is yet to come. Let our loins be girded, and our lamps burning, and ourselves like men daily waiting for their Master's return. Then, and then only, shall we have all the desires of our souls satisfied. Until then the less we expect from this world the better. Let our daily cry be, *"Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!"*

The Outlook

by J. C. Ryle, 1886

(1) The first and worst cloud which I see in our Church's outlook, is the widespread disposition to regard religious externalism as a substitute for vital soul-saving Christianity.

When I speak of **externalism**, let me explain what I mean. We all know that the *external* part of religion has received a large amount of new attention during the last forty years. All over the land it has become the fashion to restore churches, to get rid of old square pews, to improve the singing and music, to have a well-adorned choir, to decorate the church-building in a most elaborate style, and, in one word, to adorn, beautify, and improve the whole *exterior* of Church Christianity. Do I say there is anything sinful in all this? Nothing of the kind! I abhor everything like slovenliness in the ceremonials of worship. **I dislike square pews, and bad music**, and bad singing as much as anyone! But I do say, that I fear an external improvement often takes place in a church—without the slightest corresponding *increase of godliness* in the worshipers! No doubt there is a far more *show of religion* in our Churches—but it is very doubtful whether there is more vital Christianity, more presence of the Holy Spirit, more heart and conscience work, in the private lives and the homes of our people. I fear that in hundreds of cases, men have rested content with having secured a handsome church and a 'bright and hearty service,' and have forgotten that what God looks at—is the hearts of the worshipers, and the quantity of grace to be found among them.

This is a very delicate subject, and I would be sorry to be misunderstood, or to give pain to anyone in handling it. But I am obliged to say plainly, that I fail to see that all the *external improvement* of the last forty years, is accompanied by any corresponding growth of practical holiness! There is no decrease in the *total idolatry of recreations*, or the extravagant expenditure of money, or self-indulgence of all kinds. On the contrary, there is far less repentance, faith, holiness, Bible-reading, and family religion! If this state of things is not a most unhealthy symptom in the condition of a Church, I know not what is!

We may depend upon it—that knowledge of Christ, obedience to Christ, and the fruits of the Spirit—are the only tests by which God weighs and measures any Church. If these are absent, He cares nothing for beautiful buildings, fine singing, and a pompous ceremonial. These are 'leaves,' and He desires to see not leaves only, but 'fruit'. The tree of the Church of England perhaps never had so many *leaves* on it, as it has just now. I wish there was a corresponding quantity of *fruit!*

We must never forget that *the Temple service at Jerusalem* in the day of our Lord's crucifixion was the most perfect ceremonial that ever was—whether for singing, order, vestments, or general magnificence and beauty. Yet we all know that at this very time, the Jewish Church was thoroughly rotten at heart, and after forty years was swept away! Who can doubt that the little upper chamber, where the apostles met on the day of our Lord's ascension, was far more beautiful in God's sight, than the beautiful temple which our Master Himself called 'a den of thieves'? I heartily wish that we would remember this, more than we appear to do. The disposition to make an **idol of externals**, and to sacrifice the inside of religion to the outside, is, in my judgment, the darkest cloud on our ecclesiastical horizon! Of this we may be quite certain—that God will never support a Church which is content with such a low standard of practical piety.

"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the **outside** of the cup and dish, but **inside** they are full of greed and self-indulgence! Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean. Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the **outside,** but on the **inside** are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean. In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous, but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness!" Matthew 23:25-28

(2) The second thing which I see with pain in the outlook of the Church of England at the present time, is the growing tendency to ignore all distinct doctrine.

The leading idea of many minds in this day appears to be, that it does not signify much what a man believes or teaches about what are commonly considered the principal verities of the Christian faith. A wave of extravagant liberalism in religion, as well as in everything else, is sweeping over England. Concerning the Trinity, the Divinity of Christ, the atonement, the Person and work of the Holy Spirit, conversion, justification, the inspiration of Scripture, the future state, and the like—it seems to be agreed that men may believe as much or as little as they please, and nobody is to find fault. The only question you are to ask is, whether a man is 'earnest, sincere, and zealous,' and if he is, you are not to ask anything more. It is thought very narrow and illiberal to say that any opinion in religion is false, or that anybody is unsound in the faith. Distinct and positive statements about anything in Christianity are thought downright uncharitable. All the old dogmas are to be held back, and never to be put forward in a solid, tangible state—or to be put forward in such a foggy, misty manner that, like a half-developed photographic plate, they are never to come out distinct, sharp, and clear. I challenge any one who observes closely the pulpit utterances of this day, or reads speeches which touch religion, to deny the accuracy of what I have just said.

Now all this, no doubt, sounds very *noble* and *generous* and *liberal*. It is in perfect harmony with the political tendencies of the age, which all lean in the direction of the principle—that everybody is to be allowed to do what he likes, and to be at liberty to do anything except commit theft or murder. Moreover, these ideas save men a great deal of trouble in the way of thinking and inquiry in order to find out truth. But the question still remains to be answered, Can this *indifference to doctrine* stand the test of cross-examination? Is it really true that there are no limits to the Church's comprehensiveness? If it does not matter what we believe—where is the use of the Bible, Creeds, Confessions, and Articles of faith? We may as well throw them aside as useless lumber! Beside this, does history show that any good work has been done in improving human nature during the last eighteen centuries by any instrumentality except that of distinct and positive doctrine? Did the apostles turn the world upside down by proclaiming everywhere, 'Be earnest, be sincere, be moral, be charitable—and it does not matter what you believe'? Did the early church Fathers, or the Continental and English Reformers, work on these lines? Do the missionaries to the heathen abroad, or to those who are practically heathen at home, ever obtain success without distinct doctrinal statements? And, to come home to ourselves at last—is there a man or woman among us who would be content on a deathbed to be told, *'Never mind what you believe; if you are in earnest you will go to heaven'?* Questions like these demand very serious consideration.

I commend this whole subject to the attention of all who hear me. I am convinced that it is a very dark spot in the outlook of our Church at the present time, and I apprehend great danger in this quarter. Surely we must stop somewhere. There is such a thing as *liberality and 'breadth of thought' gone mad!* The modern notion, that *all faiths so called are equally good and true*, is very dangerous, and replete with eternal harm to men's souls!

TRUE PREACHING

by J. C. Ryle

The **instrumentality** by which the *spiritual reforms of the eighteenth century* carried on their operations, was of the simplest description. It was neither more nor less than the old apostolic weapon of ***preaching***. The sword which the apostle Paul wielded with such mighty effect, when he assaulted the strongholds of heathenism eighteen hundred years ago—was the same sword by which they won their victories.

They preached **everywhere**. If the pulpit of a parish church was open to them, they gladly availed themselves of it. If it could not be obtained, they were equally ready to preach in a barn. No place came amiss to them. In the field or by the roadside, on the village-green or in the market-place, in the lanes or in alleys, in cellars or in garrets, on a tub or on a table, on a bench or on a horse-block, wherever hearers could be gathered, the spiritual reformers of the eighteenth century were ready to speak to them about their souls.

They preached **simply**. They rightly concluded that the very first thing to be aimed at in a sermon—was to be understood. They strove to come down to the level of the people, and to speak what the poor could understand. To attain this they were not ashamed to crucify their style, and to sacrifice their reputations for learning. They carried out the maxim of Augustine, "A wooden key is not so beautiful as a golden one, but if it can open the door when the golden one cannot, it is far more useful."

They preached **fervently** and directly. They cast aside that dull, cold, heavy, lifeless mode of delivery, which had long made sermons a very *proverb for dullness*. They proclaimed the words of faith—with faith, and the story of life—with life. They spoke with fiery zeal, like men who were thoroughly persuaded that what they said was true, and that it was of the utmost importance to your eternal interest to hear it. They threw *heart* and *soul* and *feeling* into their sermons, and sent their hearers home convinced, at any rate, that the preacher was sincere and wished them well. They believed that you must speak from the heart—if you wish it speak to the heart, and that there must be unmistakable faith and conviction within the pulpit—if there is to be faith and conviction among the pews.

But what was the substance and **subject-matter** of the preaching which produced such wonderful effect in the eighteenth century? I will not insult my reader's common sense, by only saying that it was 'simple, earnest, fervent, real, genial, brave, life-like,' and so forth; I would have it understood that it was eminently doctrinal, dogmatic, and distinct.

For one thing, then, the spiritual reformers of the eighteenth century taught constantly the **sufficiency and supremacy of Holy Scripture**. The Bible, whole and unmutilated, was their sole rule of faith and practice. They accepted all its statements without

question or dispute. They knew nothing of any part of Scripture being uninspired. They never flinched from asserting that there can be no error in the Word of God; and that when we cannot understand or reconcile some part of its contents, the fault is in the interpreter and not in the text. In all their preaching they were eminently *men of one book*. To that book they were content to pin their faith, and by it to stand or fall.

Furthermore, the reformers of the eighteenth century taught constantly the **total corruption of human nature**. They knew nothing of the modern notion that *Christ is in every man*, and that all possess *something good within*, which they have only to stir up and use in order to be saved. They never flattered men and women in this fashion. They told them plainly that they were spiritually dead, and must be made alive again; that they were guilty, lost, helpless, hopeless, and in imminent danger of eternal ruin. Strange and paradoxical as it may seem to some, their first step towards making men good—was to show them that they were utterly bad; and their primary argument in persuading men to do something for their souls—was to convince them that they could do nothing at all.

Furthermore, the reformers of the eighteenth century taught constantly that **Christ's death** upon the cross was the only satisfaction for man's sins; and that, when Christ died, He died as our substitute, 'The just for the unjust.' This, in fact, was the cardinal point in almost all their sermons. They loved Christ's *person*; they rejoiced in Christ's *promises*; they urged men to walk after Christ's *example*. But the one subject, above all others, concerning Christ, which they delighted to dwell on, was the *atoning blood* which Christ shed for us on the cross.

Furthermore, the reformers of the eighteenth century taught constantly the great doctrine of **justification by faith**. They told men that faith was the one thing needful in order to obtain a saving interest in Christ's work for their souls. Justification, by virtue of church membership; justification, without believing or trusting—were notions to which they gave no countenance. "Everything, if you will believe, and the moment you believe; nothing, if you do not believe," was the very marrow of their preaching.

Furthermore, the reformers of the eighteenth century taught constantly the universal **necessity of heart conversion** and a new creation by the Holy Spirit. They proclaimed everywhere to the crowds they addressed, 'You must be born again.' "Sonship to God—by baptism; sonship to God—while we do the will of the devil" —such *sonship* they never admitted.

Furthermore, the reformers of the eighteenth century taught constantly the **inseparable connection between true faith and personal holiness**. A true Christian, they maintained, must always be known by his *fruits*. "No fruits—no grace," was the unvarying tenor of their preaching.

Finally, the reformers of the eighteenth century taught constantly, as doctrines both equally true, God's **eternal hatred against sin**—and God's **love towards sinners**. Both about HEAVEN and about HELL they used the utmost plainness of speech. They never shrank from declaring, in plainest terms—the certainty of God's judgment and of wrath to come, if men persisted in impenitence and unbelief. And yet, they never ceased to magnify the riches of God's kindness and compassion, and to entreat all sinners to repent and turn to God before it was too late.

Such were the *main truths* which the English evangelists of those times were constantly preaching.

Be Content

by J. C. Ryle, 1885

"Keep your lives free from the love of money and **be content** with such things as you have, because God has said—Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." Hebrews 13:5

The words which head this paper are soon spoken, and often cost the speaker very little. *Nothing is cheaper than good advice!* Everybody imagines that he can give his neighbor good counsel, and tell him exactly what he ought to do.

Yet to *practice* the lesson which heads this paper is very hard. To *talk* of *contentment* in the day of health and prosperity is easy enough; but to *be* content in the midst of poverty, sickness, trouble, disappointments, and losses—is a state of mind to which very few can attain!

Let us turn to the Bible and see how it treats this great duty of contentment. Let us mark how the great Apostle of the Gentiles speaks, when he would persuade the Hebrew Christians to be content. He backs up his injunction by a beautiful motive. He does not say nakedly, "Be content;" he adds words which would ring in the ears of all who read his letter, and nerve their hearts for a struggle: "Be content with such things as you have, because God has said—Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."

Reader, I see things in this golden sentence, which, I venture to think, deserve special notice. Give me your attention for a few minutes, and we will try to find out what they are.

1. Let us first examine the precept which Paul gives us, "Be content with what you have."

These words are very simple. A little child might easily understand them. They contain no high doctrine; they involve no deep metaphysical question; and yet, as simple as they are—the duty which these words enjoin on us, is one of the highest practical importance to all Christians.

Contentment is one of the rarest graces. Like all precious things, it is most uncommon. The old Puritan divine, who wrote a book about it, did well to call his book "The *Rare* Jewel of Christian Contentment." An Athenian philosopher is said to have gone into the market-place at midday with a lantern, in order to find out an honest man. I think he would have found it equally difficult to find one

quite contented.

The fallen angels had heaven itself to dwell in, before they fell, and the immediate presence and favor of God—but they were not content. Adam and Eve had the garden of Eden to live in, with a free grant of everything in it excepting one tree—but they were not content. Ahab had his throne and kingdom—but so long as Naboth's vineyard was not his—he was not content. Haman was the chief favorite of the Persian king—but so long as Mordecai sat at the gate, he was not content.

It is just the same everywhere in the present day. Murmuring, dissatisfaction, discontent with what we have, meet us at every turn. To say, with Jacob, "I have enough," seems flatly contrary to the grain of human nature. To say, "I want more," seems the mother tongue of every child of Adam. Our little ones around our family hearths are daily illustrations of the truth of what I am saying. They learn to ask for "more" much sooner than they learn to be satisfied. They are far more ready to cry for what they want, than to say "thank you" when they have got it.

There are few readers of this very paper, I will venture to say, who do not want something or other, different from what they have—something more or something less. What you have—does not seem so good as what you have not. If you only had this or that thing granted—you imagine that you would be quite happy.

Hear now with what power Paul's direction ought to come to all our consciences: "Be content," he says, "with such things as you have," not with such things as you once *used* to have—not with such things as you *hope* to have—but with such things as you have *now*. With such things, whatever they may be, we are to be content—with such a dwelling, such a position, such health, such income, such work, such circumstances as we have, we are to be content.

Reader, a spirit of this kind is the secret of a light heart and an easy mind. Few, I am afraid, have the least idea what a shortcut to happiness, it is to be content.

To be content is to be *rich and well off*. He is the rich man who has no wants, and requires no more. I ask not what his income may be. A man may be rich in a cottage and poor in a palace.

To be content is to be *independent*. He is the independent man who hangs on no created things for comfort, and has God for his portion.

Such a man is the only one who is always happy. Nothing can come amiss or go wrong with such a man. Afflictions will not shake him, and sickness will not disturb his peace. He can gather grapes from thorns, and figs from thistles, for he can get good out of evil. Like Paul and Silas, he will sing in prison, with his feet fast in the stocks. Like Peter, he will sleep quietly in prospect of death, the very night before his execution. Like Job, he will bless the Lord, even when stripped of all his comforts.

Ah! reader, if you would be truly happy (who does not want this?) seek it where alone it can be found. Seek it not in money, seek it not in pleasure, nor in friends, nor in learning. Seek it in having a will in perfect harmony with the will of God. Seek it in studying to be content.

You may say, It is fine talking—but how can we be always content in such a world? I answer, that you need to cast away your pride, and know your deserts, in order to be thankful in any condition. If men really knew that they deserve nothing, and are debtors to God's mercy every day, they would soon cease to complain.

You may say, perhaps, that you have such crosses, and trials, and troubles, that it is impossible to be content. I answer, that you would do well to remember your ignorance. Do you know best, what is good for you—or does God? Are you wiser than He?

The things you want—might ruin your soul. The things you have lost—might have poisoned you. Remember, Rachel must needs have children—and she had them and died! Lot must needs live near Sodom—and all his goods were burned. Let these things sink down into your heart.

2. Let us, in the second place, examine the ground on which Paul builds his precept. That ground is one single text of Scripture.

It is striking to observe what a small foundation the apostle seems to lay down, when he bids us be content. He holds out no promise of earthly good things and temporal rewards. He simply quotes a verse of God's Word. The Master has spoken. "He has said."

It is striking, beside this, to observe that the text he quotes was not originally addressed to the Hebrew Christians, but to Joshua; and yet Paul applies it to them. This shows that *Bible promises are the common property of all believers!* All have a right and title to them. All believers make one mystical body; and in hundreds of cases that which was spoken to one—may be fairly used by all.

But the main point I want to impress on men's minds is this—that we ought to make the texts and promises of the Bible our refuge in time of trouble, and the fountain of our soul's comfort.

When Paul wanted to enforce a grace and recommend a duty—he quoted a text. When you and I would give a reason for our hope, or when we feel that we need strength and consolation, we must go to our Bibles, and try to find out suitable texts. The lawyer uses old cases and decisions when he pleads his cause. "Such a judge has said such a thing, and therefore," he argues, "it is a settled point." The soldier on the battle-field takes up certain positions, and does certain things; and if you ask him why, he will say, "I have such and such orders from my general, and I obey them."

The true Christian must always use his Bible in like manner. The Bible must be his book of *reference* and *precedents*. The Bible must be to him his captain's orders. If any one asks him why he *thinks* as he does, *lives* as he does, *feels* as he does—all he has need to reply is, "God has spoken to such an effect. I have my orders—and that is enough."

Reader, I know not whether I make the point clear, but it is one which, simple as it seems, is of great practical importance. I want you to see the place and office of the Bible, and the unspeakable importance of knowing it well, and being acquainted with its

contents. I want you to arm yourself with texts and verses of the Bible, fastened down in your memory, to *read* so as to *remember*, and to remember so as to *use* what you read.

You and I have trouble and sorrow before us—it needs no prophetic eye to see that. Sicknesses, deaths, partings, separations, disappointments, are sure to come. What is to sustain us in the days of darkness, which are many? Nothing is so able to do it, as texts out of the Bible.

You and I, in all probability, may lie for months on a bed of sickness. Heavy days and weary nights, an aching body, and an enfeebled mind—may make life a burden. And what will support us? Nothing is likely to cheer and sustain us—so much as verses out of the Bible.

You and I have death to look forward to. There will be friends to be left, home to be given up, the grave to be visited, an unknown world to be entered, and the last judgment after all. And what will sustain and comfort us when our last moments draw near? Nothing, I firmly believe, is so able to help our heart in that solemn hour—as texts out of the Bible.

I want men to fill their minds with passages of Scripture while they are well and strong, that they may have sure help in the day of need. I want them to be diligent in studying their Bibles, and becoming familiar with their contents, in order that the grand old Book may stand by them and talk with them when all earthly friends fail.

From the bottom of my heart I pity that man who never reads his Bible. I wonder whence he expects to draw his consolation by-and-by. I do implore him to change his plan—and to change it without delay! One said on his death-bed, "If I had served my God half as well as I have served my king, he would not have left me in my trouble." I fear it will be said of many, one day, "If they had read their Bibles as diligently as they read their newspapers, they would not have been devoid of consolation when they needed it most."

The Bible applied to the heart by the Holy Spirit, is the only *treasury of consolation*. Without it we have nothing to depend on; "our feet will slide in due time" (Deut. 32:35). With it we are like those who stand on a rock. That man is ready for anything—who has got a firm hold of God's promises.

Once more, then, I say to every reader, arm yourself with a thorough knowledge of God's Word. Read it, and be able to say, "I have hope, because it is thus and thus written! I am not afraid, because it is thus and thus written!" Happy is that soul who can say with Job, "I have esteemed the words of his mouth—more than my necessary food!" (Job 23. 12).

3. Let us examine, in the last place, the particular text Paul quotes in enforcing the duty of contentment. He tells the Hebrews, "God has said—I will never leave you, nor forsake you."

It matters little to what person in the Trinity we ascribe these words, whether to Father, Son, or Holy Spirit. It all comes to the same in the end. They all are engaged to save man in the covenant of grace. Each of the three Persons says, as the other two, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you."

There is great sweetness in this peculiar promise. It deserves close attention. God says to every man or woman, who is willing to commit his or her soul to the mercy that is in Christ, "I will never leave you, and never forsake you." I, the eternal Father, the mighty God, the King of kings, "will never leave you." The English language fails to give the full meaning of the Greek. It implies, "never—no never—no, nor ever leave you!"

Now, if I know anything of this world, it is a world of "leaving, forsaking, parting, separation, failure, and disappointment." Think how immense the comfort of finding something which will never leave nor fail.

Earthly good things leave us. Health, money, property, friendship, all make themselves wings and flee away. They are here today—and gone tomorrow. But God says, "I will never leave you!"

We leave one another. We grow up in families full of affection and tender feelings, and then we are all thoroughly scattered. One follows his calling or profession one way, and another in another. We go north and south, and east and west, and perhaps meet no more. We meet our nearest friends and relations only at rare intervals, and then to part again. But God says, "I will never leave you."

We are left by those we love. They die and diminish, and become fewer and fewer every year. The more lovely—like flowers—the more frail, and delicate, and short-lived, they seem to be. But God says, "I will never leave you."

Separation is the universal law everywhere—except between Christ and his people. *Death* and *failure* stamp every other thing; but there is no separation in the love of God to believers.

The closest relation on earth—the marriage bond—has an end. Marriage is only "until death us do part." But the relation between Christ and the sinner who trusts in him, never ends. It lives when the body dies. It lives when flesh and heart fail. Once begun, it never withers. It is only made brighter and stronger by the grave. "I am persuaded," says Paul, "that neither life, nor death, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature—shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord!" (Romans 8:38, 39).

But this is not all. There is a peculiar depth of wisdom in the words, "I will never leave—nor forsake." Observe, God does *not* say, "My people shall always have pleasant things; they shall always be fed in green pastures, and have no trials—or trials very short and few." He neither says so, nor does he appoint such a lot to his people. On the contrary, he sends them *affliction* and *chastisement*. He tries them—by *suffering*. He purifies them—by *sorrow*. He exercises their faith—by *disappointments*. But still, in all these things he promises, "I will never leave—nor forsake."

Let every believer grasp these words, and store them up in his heart. Keep them ready, and have them fresh in your memory; you will need them one day. The *Philistines* will be upon you; the hand of *sickness* will lay you low; the *king of terror* will draw near; the valley of the shadow of death will open up before your eyes. Then comes the hour when you will find nothing so comforting, as a text like this—nothing so cheering, as a realizing sense of God's companionship.

Stick to that word "never." It is worth its weight in gold. Cling to it as a drowning man clings to a rope. Grasp it firmly, as a soldier attacked on all sides grasps his sword. God has said, and will stand to it, "I will never leave you!"

"Never!" Though your heart often faints, and you are sick of self, and your many failures and infirmities; even then the promise will not fail.

"Never!" Though the devil whispers, *'I shall have you at last! In little while, your faith will fail, and you will be mine!'* Even then, God will keep his Word.

"Never!" Though waves of trouble go over your head, and all hope seems taken away. Even then the Word of God will stand.

"Never!" When the cold chill of death is creeping over you, and friends can do no more, and you are starting on that journey from which there is no return. Even then—Christ will not forsake you.

"Never!" When the Day of Judgment comes, and the books are opened, and the dead are rising from their graves, and eternity is beginning. Even then the promise will bear all your weight. Christ will not leave his hold on your soul.

Oh, believing reader, trust in the Lord forever, for he says, "I will never leave you!" Lean back all your weight upon him—do not be afraid. Glory in his promise. Rejoice in the strength of your consolation. You may say boldly, "The Lord is my helper—and I will not fear."

I conclude this paper with **three practical remarks**. Consider them well, reader, and lay them to heart—

(1.) Let me tell you why there is so little contentment in the world. The simple answer is, because there is so little grace, and true religion. Few know their own sin; few feel their desert; and so few are content with such things as they have. Humility, self-knowledge, a clear sight of our own utter vileness and corruption, these are the true roots of contentment.

(2.) Let me tell you, secondly, what you should do, if you would be content. You must know your own heart, seek God for your portion, take Christ for your Savior, and use God's Word for your daily food.

Contentment is not to be learned at the feet of Gamaliel, but at the feet of Jesus Christ. He who has God for his friend and heaven for his home—can wait for his good things, and be content with little here below.

(3.) Let me tell you, lastly, that there is one thing with which we ought never to be content. That thing is a little religion, a little faith, a little hope, and a little grace. Let us never sit down satisfied with a little of these things. On the contrary, let us seek them more and more.

When Alexander the Great visited the Greek philosopher Diogenes, he asked him if there was anything that he wanted, and that he could give him. He got this short answer: "I want nothing but that you should stand from between me and the sun." Let the spirit of that answer run through our religion. One thing there is which should never satisfy and content us, and that is, "anything that stands between our souls and Christ."

"I am not saying this because I am in need, for **I have learned to be content** whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. **I have learned the secret of being content** in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength." Philippians 4:11-13

Many Shall Come

by J. C. Ryle

"Many shall come from the east and west—and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 8:11

The words of Scripture which head this page were spoken by our Lord Jesus Christ. You may take them either as a prophecy or as a promise. In either point of view they are deeply interesting, and contain much food for thought. Take the words as a **prophecy**, and remember that they are sure to be fulfilled. The Bible contains many predictions of things most unlikely and improbable, which have yet proved true. Was it not said of Ishmael, the father of the Arabian race, that he was to be "a wild man, his hand against every man, and every man's hand against him?" (Gen. 16:12). We see the fulfillment of those words at this very day, when we look at the tribes in the Sudan, or observe the ways of the Bedouins. Was it not said of Egypt that it was finally to become "the basest of kingdoms," and its inhabitants a people who could neither govern themselves nor be governed? (Ezek. 29:15). We see the fulfillment of those words at this very day along the whole valley of the Nile, and every statesman in Europe knows it to his sorrow. It will be just the same with the prophecy before our eyes. "Many shall sit down in the kingdom of heaven."

Take the words as a **promise**. It was spoken for the encouragement of the Apostles, and of all Christian ministers and teachers down to the present day. We are often tempted to think that preaching, and teaching, and visiting, and trying to bring souls to Christ does no good, and that our labor is all thrown away. But here is the promise of One who "cannot lie," and never failed to keep His word. He cheers us with a gracious sentence. He would have us not faint or give way to despair. Whatever we may think, and however little success we may see, there is a Scripture before us which cannot be broken, "Many shall sit down in the kingdom of heaven."

I. We have first in these words, the number of those who shall be saved. Our Lord Jesus Christ declares that they shall be "many."

How strange that word "many" sounds! Will any be saved who are not born again, washed in Christ's blood, and sanctified by the Holy Spirit? Will any be saved who have not repented of sin, believed on the Lord Jesus for forgiveness, and been made holy in heart?

None, none, certainly none. If men and women can be *saved without repentance, faith and holiness*—we may as well throw the Bible away, and give up Christianity altogether!

But are there many people of this kind to be seen in the world? Alas! there are very few. The believers whom we see and know are "a little flock." "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leads unto life; and few there be that find it" (Matt. 7:14). Few are to be seen in towns, and few in country parishes! Few among the rich, and few among the poor! Few among the old, and few among the young! Few among the learned, and few among the unlearned! Few in palaces, and few in cottages! It is an abiding sorrow with all true Christians, that they meet so few with whom they can pray, and praise, and read the Bible, and talk of spiritual things. They often feel to stand alone. Many are the people who never go to any place of worship from the first day of January to the last day of December, and seem to live without God in the world. Few are the men and women who do anything for the cause of Christ upon earth, or appear to care whether those around them are lost or saved. Can any one deny these things? Impossible! Yet here is our Lord Jesus Christ saying, "Many shall sit down in the kingdom of heaven."

Now, why did our Lord say so? He never made a mistake, and all that He says is true. Let me try to throw some light on this question.

(a) There shall be "many" when all are gathered together who have died in the Lord, from Abel, the first saint, down to the last who is found alive when the trumpet sounds, and the resurrection takes place. They shall be a "multitude, which no man can number" (Rev. 7. 9).

(b) There shall be "many" when all the believers of every name, and nation, and people, and tongue—the Old Testament saints, like Enoch, and Noah, and Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and Moses, and David, and the Prophets—the saints of the New Testament, like the Apostles—the saints among the primitive Christians, and the Reformers—when all these are brought together, they will be "a multitude which no man can number."

(c) There will be "many" when the true Christians are gathered together, who are now scattered over the face of the globe, and not known either by the Church or the world. There are not a few who belong to no congregation, and are not numbered in any list of communicants, though their names are in the Lamb's book of life. Some of them live and die in great neglected parishes unknown and unvisited. Some of them get hold of the truth by hearing the Gospel preached by missionaries at home or abroad; but the preacher has never known them, and they have never been formally enrolled in the list of converts. Some of them are soldiers and sailors, who stand alone in regiments and on board ship, and are not understood by their companions. There are myriads of such persons, I believe, who live the life of faith, and love Christ, and are known to the Lord, though not known by men. These also will make a large addition to the "multitude which no man can number."

The plain truth is, that the family of God will be found at last much larger than most of us suppose it is. We look at the things we see with our own eyes, and we forget how much there is going on in the world, in Europe, Asia, Africa, and America, which our eyes never see at all. The inner life of the vast majority of all around us is a hidden thing, of which we know nothing. We do not think of the ages that are past, and the countless millions who are now "dust and ashes," though each in his turn fell asleep in Christ and was carried to heaven. No doubt it is perfectly true that "Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leads to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat" (Matt. 7:13). It is fearful to think what an immense majority of all around us appear dead in sin, and utterly unprepared to meet God. But, for all that, we must not underrate the number of God's children. Even supposing they are in a minority, when judged by human estimate, they will still prove at last to be very many in the kingdom of glory, an enormous company, "a multitude which no man can number."

Is any reader of these pages disposed to laugh at religion, because those who profess it decidedly are few in number? Are you secretly inclined to despise those who read their Bibles, and make a conscience of keeping their Sundays holy, and trying to walk closely with God? Are you afraid of making a profession yourself, because you think there will be so few with you and so many against you, and you do not like to be singular, and stand alone? Alas! there have always been many like you! When Noah built the ark, there were few with him, and many mocked at him—but he was found to be in the right at last. When the Jews were rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem after the return from Babylon, Sanballat and Tobiah scoffed at them, and said, "What do these feeble Jews?" When the Lord Jesus Christ left the world, only a hundred and twenty disciples met together in the upper chamber in Jerusalem, while the friends of the unbelieving Pharisees, and scribes, and priests were numbered by tens of thousands. But the disciples were right, and their enemies were wrong. When bloody Mary sat on the throne, and Latimer and Ridley were burnt at the stake, the friends of the Gospel seemed very few, and their enemies were a great majority. Yet the Reformers were right, and their enemies were wrong.

Take care of what you are doing! Beware of judging vital Christianity by the small number of those who seem to profess it. You may have the crowd with you now, and the laugh may be on your side—but a day is coming when you will open your eyes with amazement, and find out, perhaps too late, that the very people whom you despised were not few, but many, a vast company, "a multitude which no man can number."

Is any reader of this paper disposed to be cast down and discouraged, because he loves Christ, and tries to serve Him, but finds himself almost entirely alone? Does your heart sometimes fail you, and your hands hang down, and your knees wax faint, because you so seldom meet anyone whom you can pray with, and praise with, and read with, and talk with about Christ, and open your heart to without fear? Do you ever mourn in secret for lack of company? Well, you are only drinking the cup which many have drunk before you. Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and Joseph, and Moses, and Samuel, and David, and the Prophets, and Paul, and John, and the Apostles were all people who stood very much alone. Do you expect to fare better than them?

Take comfort, and have faith. There is more grace in the world than you can see, and more Christians traveling towards heaven than you are aware of. Elijah thought he stood alone, when there were "seven thousand in Israel who had not bowed the knee to Baal." Take comfort, and look forward. Your good time is coming. You will have plenty of company by-and-by. You will find many and not few in the kingdom of heaven—many to welcome you—many to rejoice and praise with—many with whom you will spend a blessed eternity. How pleasant it is to meet a single saint now for a few short hours! How it cheers and refreshes us, like snow in summer or sunshine after clouds! What, then, will it be when we shall see an enormous company of saints, without a single unconverted sinner to spoil the harmony; all men and women of faith, and none unbelievers; all wheat and no chaff; "a multitude which no man can number!" Surely the "many" we shall see in heaven will make ample amends for the "few" that we now see upon earth.

II. We have, secondly, in our Lord Jesus Christ's words, the dwellings and position of those who shall be finally saved. It is written "that they shall come from the east and the west."

There can be little doubt that this expression is a proverbial one. It must not be taken literally, as if the saved were not to come from the north and south, but only from the rising and setting of the sun. We find the same expression in the 103rd Psalm, where it is said, "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us." The meaning is simply this: The saved shall come from different places—from distant places—and from places where you would have thought it most unlikely they would be found.

(a) They will not all have belonged to one **church**. There will be Episcopalians, and Presbyterians, and Independents, and Baptists, and Methodists, and Plymouth Brethren, and many other kinds of Christians whom I have neither space nor time to name. However much they may disagree and dispute now, they will have to agree at last. They will find to their amazement that the points upon which they were of one mind were a vast quantity, and the points on which they differed were very few. They will all be able to say with one heart, "Hallelujah! praise to Him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood!" And they will all be able to reply with one voice, "Amen, amen!" The anthem in heaven, said good George Whitefield, will be to all eternity, "What has God wrought!" The points of earthly disagreement will have dropped off, and melted like snow in spring. The common teaching of the Holy Spirit will stand out clear and plain before every eye in heaven. At length there will be one real Church, without spot or blemish or any such thing, without quarreling, controversy, or dissension, all wheat and no tares, all sound members and none unsound.

(b) They will come from various **countries** in every part of the globe, from Greenland's icy mountains, and the scorching regions of the tropics, from India and Australia, from America and from China, from New Zealand and the islands of the Pacific Ocean, from Africa and from Mexico. Some will have laid their bones in solitary graves like Henry Martyn in Persia, with none to do them honor in their death. Some will have been buried at sea with a sailor's funeral. Some will have died the death of martyrs, and been burnt to ashes like our own Reformers. Some will have fallen victims to malignant climates, or heathen violence at missionary stations. And some will have died like Moses, in places where no human eye saw them. But they shall all come together, and meet again in the kingdom of heaven. It matters little where we are buried, and how we are buried, and in what kind of a grave. China is just as near to heaven as England is, and the sea shall give up her dead at the same moment as the land. Our coffin, and our funeral, and the burial service, and the long procession of mourners, are all matters of very secondary importance. The one point we should aim to make sure, from whatever place we may come, is to be among those who "shall sit down in the kingdom of heaven."

(c) They shall come from utterly different **ranks**, classes, and professions. Heaven will be a place for servants as well as masters, for maids as well as mistresses, for poor as well as rich, for the unlearned as well as the learned, for tenants as well as landlords, for subjects as well as rulers, for the pauper as well as the queen. There is no royal road to heaven, and there will be no class distinctions when we get there. At length there will be perfect equality, perfect fraternity, and perfect freedom. It will matter nothing whether we had much money on earth, or none at all. The only question will be whether we have really repented of our sins, really believed on the Lord Jesus, and were really converted and sanctified people. There will be no preference given to those who have come from monasteries, nunneries, or hermits' caves.

It is very likely that those who have done their duty in that state of life to which God called them, and have carried Christ's cross in the Army or the Navy, in Parliament or at the Bar, in the bank or the merchant's office, behind the counter or at the bottom of a coal-pit, will be found in the first rank in the kingdom of heaven. It is not necessary to wear a peculiar dress, or to put on an austere countenance, and to retire from the world, in order to sit down in the kingdom of heaven.

(d) They shall come from most unlikely places, and from **positions** in which you would have thought the seed of eternal life could never have grown up in a soul. Saul, the young Pharisee, came from the feet of Gamaliel, and from persecuting Christians, and rose to be the great Apostle of the Gentiles, who turned the world upside down. Daniel lived in Babylon, and served God faithfully in the midst of idolatry and heathenism. Peter was once a fisherman on the sea of Galilee. Matthew was a public tax-gatherer, who spent his days in receiving custom. Luther and Latimer began life as devoted Papists, and ended life as devoted Christians. John Bunyan, the author of "Pilgrim's Progress," was once a careless, thoughtless, swearing, young man in a country village. George Whitefield served in a public house at Gloucester, and spent his early days in cleaning pots and carrying out beer. John Newton, the author of well-known hymns and letters, was once the captain of a slave-ship on the coasts of Africa, and saw no harm in buying and selling human flesh and blood. All these truly "came from east and west," and seemed at one time in their lives the most unlikely people in the world to come to Christ, and "sit down in the kingdom of heaven." But they did come unmistakably, and they are an everlasting proof that our Lord Jesus Christ's words are strictly true. Men and women may "come from the east and west," and yet be found at last in the kingdom of eternal happiness and glory.

Let us learn never to despair of the salvation of anyone, as long as he lives. Fathers ought never to despair of prodigal sons. Mothers ought never to despair of self-willed, headstrong daughters. Husbands should never despair of wives, nor wives of husbands. There is nothing impossible with God. The **arm of grace is very long**, and can reach those who seem very far off. The Holy Spirit can change any heart. The blood of Christ can cleanse away any sin. Let us pray on, and hope on, for others, however unlikely their salvation may appear to be at present. We shall see many in heaven whom we never expected to see there. The last may yet prove first, and the first last. The famous Grimshaw of Yorkshire, when he died, left his only son unconverted, careless, thoughtless, and indifferent to true religion. The day came when the young man's heart was changed, and he walked in the steps of his father. And when he lay upon his deathbed, one of his last words was, "What will my old father say when he sees me in heaven!" "Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save!" Isaiah 59:1

Let us learn not to sorrow "as those who have no hope," when we part from friends who are true Christians, and part, perhaps, forever. The separations and goodbyes of this world are probably some of its most painful things. When the family circle is broken up, when the old nest begins to lose its inhabitants, when the young man sets sail for Australia, New Zealand, or the Fiji Islands, with no hope of returning for ten or twelve years—when these things take place, it is a sore trial to flesh and blood. I have witnessed scenes on the landing-stage at Liverpool, when the great steamships are about to start for America, which might bring tears to the eyes of the most cold-hearted stranger. The partings of this world are terrible things; but true faith in Christ and the resurrection to eternal life through Him, takes the sting out of the worst of partings. It enables a believer to look beyond the things seen to the things unseen, to

the coming of the Savior, and our gathering together unto Him. Yes, it is a pleasant thing to remember, as the great ship moves away, and we wave our last adieux, "it is but a little time, and we shall see them all again to part no more." God's people shall come together from east and west, and we shall all meet at last "in the kingdom of heaven," and go out no more.

III. We have, thirdly, in our Lord Jesus Christ's words, the future portion and reward of those who shall be finally saved. It is written, "they shall sit down in the kingdom of heaven."

That expression, "sit down," is a very pleasant and comfortable one to my mind. Let us sift it, and examine it, and see what it contains. In the judgement day believers shall STAND with boldness at the right hand of Christ, and say, "Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died--more than that, who was raised to life--is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us." (Romans 8:33, 34). But when the judgement is passed and over, and the eternal kingdom begins, they shall "SIT DOWN."

(a) Sitting down implies a sense of CONFIDENCE and being at home. If we were in the presence of a stern judge, or of a king clothed in awful majesty, we should not dare to sit down. But there will be nothing to make believers afraid in the kingdom of heaven. The sins of their past lives will not make them tremble and feel alarmed. However many, however great, and however black, they will all have been washed away in Christ's precious blood, and not one spot will remain. Completely justified, completely absolved, completely forgiven, completely "accepted in the Beloved," they will be counted righteous before God for the sake of Him who was made sin for us, though He knew no sin (2 Cor. v. 21).

Though the sins of their lives "were as scarlet, they shall be made white as snow; and though red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Their sins will be "remembered no more;" "sought for, and not found;" "blotted out as a thick cloud;" "cast behind God's back;" "plunged in the depths of the sea." Believers will need no *purgatory* after they die. It is ignorance and unbelief to think so. Once joined to Christ by faith, they are complete in the sight of God the Father, and even the perfect angels shall see no spot in them. Surely they may well sit down; and feel at home! They may remember all the sins of their past lives, and be humbled at the recollection of them. But those sins will not make them afraid.

The sense of daily failure, weakness, imperfection, and inward conflict, will no longer mar their peace. At last their sanctification will be completed. The war within shall come to a perfect end. Their old besetting sins and infirmities will have dropped off, and melted away. At length they shall be able to serve God without weariness, and attend on Him without distraction, and not be obliged to cry continually, "Wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Romans 7:24). Who can tell the blessedness of all this while we are yet in the body? Here in this world we do not realize the completeness of our justification, and "groan, being burdened" by reason of our imperfect sanctification. Our best endeavors after holiness are accompanied by a sorrowful consciousness of daily failure. But when "the old man" is at last entirely dead, and the flesh no longer lusts against the spirit—when there is an end of indwelling sin, and the world and the devil can no longer tempt us, then at last we shall understand what God has prepared for them that love Him. We shall "sit down in the kingdom of heaven." But this is not all.

(b) Sitting down implies REST, and a complete cessation of work, and toil, and conflict. There is a rest which remains for the people of God. Here in this life we are never still. The Word of God tells us that the Christian must "walk," and "run," and "work," and "labor," and "fight," and "groan," and "carry the cross," and wear the "armor," and stand like a sentinel on guard in an enemy's land. It is not until we enter the kingdom of heaven that we must expect to "sit down."

Work for Christ, no doubt, is pleasant, and even in this life brings a rich reward—the reward of a happy conscience, a reward which the mere politician, or merchant, or man of pleasure, can never reap, because they only seek a corruptible crown. "They who drink of these waters shall thirst again." But even the Christian's work is exhausting to flesh and blood; and so long as we dwell in a mortal body, work and weariness will go together. *The very sight of sin in others, which we cannot check, is a daily trial to our souls.* No doubt the fight of faith is a "good fight," but there never can be fighting without wounds, and pain, and fatigue. The very *armor* the Christian is bid to put on is *heavy*. The helmet and the breastplate, the shield and the sword, without which we cannot overcome the devil, can never be worn without constant exertion. Surely it will be a blessed time when our enemies will all be slain, and we can lay aside our armor in safety, and "sit down in the kingdom of heaven."

In the meantime let us never forget that the time is short. Even the devil knows that, and has great wrath because he has but a short time (Rev. 12:12). Let us work on, and fight on—in full assurance of hope, with the blessed recollection that it shall not be forever. When the great battle of Waterloo was raging, and the outcome of the day seemed to tremble in the balance, it is said that the Duke of Wellington kept calmly turning his eyes to the left, in the confident expectation that in a little time his Prussian allies would appear, and his victory would be sure. Let this kind of hope animate our souls when we are bearing the labor and heat of the day. Our King is soon coming, and when he comes we shall "sit down," and toil and fight no more!

IV. The fourth and last thing which the words of our Lord Jesus Christ contain is, the COMPANY which those who are finally saved shall enjoy forever.

Now, company is one great secret of happiness. Man is by nature a social being. It is a rare exception indeed to find anyone who likes to be always alone. A palace filled with untold wealth and luxuries, would at last be little better than a prison—if we lived in it entirely alone. A cottage with congenial companions is a happier dwelling-place than a royal castle with—no one to speak to, no one to listen to, no one to exchange mind with, no one to converse with, but one's own poor heart. We all need someone to live with and love. Even the solitary dweller on a island, like Robinson Crusoe, is never satisfied to dwell alone.

Our blessed Lord, who formed man out of the dust of the earth, and made him what he is, knows that perfectly well. When, therefore, it describes the future portion of His believing people, He takes care to tell us what kind of company they shall have in the kingdom of heaven. He says that the saved shall "sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" in the world to come.

Now, what does that expression mean? Let us look at it, analyze it, and see what it contains.

The companions of the saved in the eternal world, shall be all the believers who have ever lived on earth from the beginning to the end. The old soldiers, the old pilgrims, the old servants of Christ, the old members of Christ's family—all, in a word, who have lived by

faith and served Christ, and walked with God, these shall form the company in which the saved shall spend an endless existence.

They shall see all the old worthies of whom they read in the Old Testament, the Patriarchs, the Prophets, and the holy kings, who looked forward to the coming of Christ, but died without seeing Him. They shall see the New Testament saints, the Apostles, and the holy men and women who saw Christ face to face. They shall see the early fathers who died for the truth, and were thrown to the lions, or beheaded under the persecution of the Roman emperors. They shall see the gallant Reformers who revived the Gospel out of the dust on the Continent, and unstopped the wells of living water which Rome had filled up with rubbish.

They shall see the blessed martyrs of our own land, who brought about the glorious Protestant Reformation, and gave the Bible to our countrymen in the English tongue, and cheerfully died at the stake for the cause of the Gospel. They shall see the holy men of the eighteenth century, Whitefield, and Wesley, Romaine, and their companions, who, in the face of bitter opposition, revived religion in the Church of England. Above all, they shall see their own friends who fell asleep in Christ, and whom they once followed to their graves with many tears, and see them with the comfortable thought that they shall part no more. Surely the thought of such companionship as this should cheer us as we travel on the narrow way! It is a good thing yet to come.

There is little happiness in company—unless there is *entire sympathy and congeniality of taste*. It is one of the heaviest trials of a true Christian upon earth—that he meets so few people who are entirely of one mind with him about religion. How often in society he finds himself obliged to hold his tongue and say nothing, and to hear and see many things which make his heart ache, and send him back to his own home heavy and depressed! It is a rare privilege to meet two or three occasionally to whom he can open his heart, and with whom he can speak freely, without fear of giving offence or being misunderstood. But there will be an end of this state of things, in the kingdom of heaven. Those who are saved will find none there—who have not been led by the same Spirit, and gone through the same experience as themselves.

There will not be a man or woman there—who has not felt deeply the burden of sin, mourned over it, confessed it, fought with it, and tried to crucify it. There will not be a man or woman there—who has not fled to Christ by faith, cast the whole weight of his soul upon Him, and rejoiced in Him as his Redeemer. There will not be a man or woman there—who has not delighted in the Word of God, poured out his soul in prayer at the throne of grace, and striven to live a holy life. In a word, there will be none there—who have not known something of repentance toward God, faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, and holiness of life and conversation. It is pleasant to meet a few people of this kind on earth as we travel along the narrow way which leads to heaven. It refreshes us like a brook by the way, and is like a little peep within the veil. But what will it be when we see "a multitude, which no man can number," of saints completely delivered from all sin, and not one single unconverted person among them to mar the harmony!

What shall it be when we shall meet our own believing friends once more, at last made perfect, and find that *their* besetting sins, and *our* own besetting sins, have all passed away, and there is nothing left in us—but grace without corruption! Yet all this is to come when we pass within the veil. The inhabitants are not to be a *mixed* multitude unable to understand one another. They are all to be of one heart and of one mind. We are not to sit down amidst ignorant, godless, and unconverted people, but "with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven." Heaven itself would be no heaven if all sorts of characters got there—as some people falsely teach. There could be no order and no happiness in such a heaven. There must be *fitness* for "the inheritance of the saints in light" (Col. 1. 12).

(1) And now, reader, before you lay down this paper, ask yourself whether you shall be found among the many who shall "sit down in the kingdom of heaven." The **question** demands an answer. I charge you to give your soul no rest until you can answer it in a satisfactory way. Time is passing quickly away, and the world is growing old. The signs of the times ought to set us all thinking. "The distress of nations with perplexity" seems to increase every year. The wisdom of statesmen seems utterly unable to prevent wars and confusion in every direction. The progress of art, and science, and civilization appear entirely powerless to prevent the existence of enormous moral evils. Nothing will ever cure the diseases of human nature—but the return of the Great Physician, the Prince of Peace, the second coming of Jesus Christ Himself. And when He comes, shall you be found among the "many" who shall "sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven?"

Why should you not be found among *the many*? I know no reason except your own indolence and laziness, or your own determined love of sin and the world. An open door is before you! Why not enter into it? The Lord Jesus Christ is able and ready to save you—why not commit your soul to Him, and lay hold on the hand which He holds out from heaven? I repeat that I know no reason why you should not be found among the "many" at the last day.

You imagine that there is time enough, and no need of hurry or immediate decision. You had better take care what you are saying. It is not given to all men and women to live to eighty years, and then die quietly in their beds. The notice to leave this mortal body sometimes comes very suddenly, and men and women are summoned to go forth in a *moment* into the unseen world! You had better use time while you have it, and not make shipwreck on that miserable rock, *"a convenient season."*

Are you afraid that people will laugh at you, and mock you—if you begin to care for your soul, and to seek a place in the kingdom of heaven? Cast the cowardly feeling behind your back, and resolve never to be ashamed of religion. Alas! Where are too many who will find at last that they were *laughed out of heaven—and laughed into hell!* Fear not the reproach of man, who at most can only injure your body. Fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Lay hold boldly on Christ—and He will give you the victory over all that you now fear. He who enabled the Apostle Peter, who once ran away and denied his Master, to stand firm as a rock before the Jewish council, and at length to die for the Gospel, the Lord I say is still living at the right hand of God, and is able to save to the uttermost all who come to God by Him, and to make you more than conqueror!

Do you think that you will not be happy if you seek to have your soul saved, and to sit down in the kingdom of heaven? Cast aside the unworthy thought as a lying suggestion of the devil. There are no people so truly happy as true Christians. Whatever a sneering world may please to say—believers have food to eat which the world knows not, and inward comforts which the world cannot understand. There is no gloominess in true religion, and no true religion in looking gloomy, sour, or austere. In spite of cross and conflict, the true Christian has an inward peace compared to which the world has nothing to give; for it is a peace which trouble, bereavement, sickness, and death itself cannot take away! The words of the Master are strictly true, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world gives, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14. 27). If men and women

want to be truly happy, they should strive to be among those who "shall sit down in the kingdom of heaven."

(2) Last, but not least, let me wind up all by offering a word of **exhortation** and **encouragement** to those who have reason to hope that they are among the many who shall sit down in the kingdom of heaven.

Would you have much joy and peace in believing? Try to do all the good you can in the world. There is always much to be done, and few to do it. There are always many living and dying in ignorance and sin—and no one goes near them, and tries to save their souls. We live in days when there is little real Christian work done to mend the evils of the times! If all the Christians in all our churches laid themselves out to go among those who are without God in the world, with the Bible in their hands, and Christ-like loving sympathy in their hearts—they would soon be far happier than they are now—and the face of society would soon be changed. Idleness is one great cause of the low spirits of which so many complain. Too many, far too many Christians, seem quite content to go to heaven alone, and to care nothing about bringing others into the kingdom of God.

If you try to do good in the right way—you never need doubt that good will be done. Many a Sunday school teacher comes home on Sunday night with a heavy heart, and imagines that his or her labor is all in vain. Many a home visitor returns from his rounds, and thinks he is producing no effect. Many a minister comes down from his pulpit desponding and cast down, imagining that his preaching is to no purpose. But all this is disgraceful unbelief. There is often far more going on in hearts and consciences than we see.

He who "goes on his way weeping, bearing forth the seed; he shall come again with joy, bringing his sheaves with him" (Psalm 126:6). There are more being converted and saved than we suppose. "*Many* shall sit down in the kingdom of heaven" whom we never expected to see there. Let us read on, and pray on, and visit on, and speak on, and tell of Christ to everyone whom we can get at. If we are only "steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord," we shall find, to our amazement, that our labor was not in vain in the Lord. (1 Cor. 15:58).

But if we try to do good, we must always cultivate *patience*. We cannot have two heavens—a heaven here in this world—and a heaven hereafter. The battle is not yet over. The harvest-time is not yet come. The devil is not yet bound. The time when our Lord's promise shall be fulfilled, is not yet arrived. But it will arrive before long!

When the late Queen Victoria at the end of the Crimean war came forward, and with her own royal hands gave the Victoria Cross to the gallant soldiers who had earned it, that public honor made rich amends for all that those soldiers had gone through. The hardships of the trenches were all forgotten for the time, and seemed comparatively small things. What, then, will be the joy when the Captain of our salvation shall gather His faithful soldiers around Him, and give to each one a crown of glory which never fades away! Surely we may well wait in patience for that day. It is coming, and will surely come at last. Remembering that day, let us cast behind us doubts and unbelief, and set our faces steadily towards the new Jerusalem. "The night is far spent, and the day is at hand." Not one word of the blessed promise before us shall fail! "Many shall come from the east and west—and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven!"

Come!

by J. C. Ryle

"Come unto Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden—and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28.

The name of the tract before you is short—but the subject which that name unfolds is deeply important. It is the first word of a text of Scripture which deserves to be written in letters of gold. I offer that text to you as a friendly invitation: I entreat you to look at it, and ponder it well. That single text may be the salvation of your soul.

Our years are passing quickly away. As each successive stage of the year comes round, we hear of gatherings and invitations: Easter and Christmas are times when friends invite friends to come and see them. But there is one invitation which demands attention every day in the year—that invitation is the one which I bring you this day. It may be unlike any that you have yet received; but it is of unspeakable importance—it concerns the eternal happiness of your soul.

Reader, do not shrink back when you read these words. I do not want to spoil your pleasures, provided always that your pleasures are not mixed with sin. I know that there is a time to laugh, as well as a time to weep. But I do want you to be thoughtful—as well as happy; to consider—as well as to make mirth. There are some missing every Easter who a year before were alive and well; there are some every year gathering round Christmas fire-sides, who a year afterwards will be lying in their graves!

Reader, how long have you yourself to live? Will another Easter, or another Christmas find you alive? Once more I entreat you to listen to the invitations which I bring you this day. I have a message for you from my Master. He says, "Come unto Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden—and I will give you rest."

There are four points in the text before you, to which I ask your attention. On each of these I have something to say.

I. First. Who is the *Speaker* of this invitation?

II. Secondly. To *whom* is this invitation addressed?

III. Thirdly. What does the Speaker ask you to *do?*

IV. Lastly. What does the Speaker offer to *give*?

May the Holy Spirit bless the reading of this tract to your everlasting benefit. May this day be a day to be specially remembered in the history of your soul!

I. In the first place, Who is the Speaker of the invitation which heads this tract? Who is it that invites so freely—and offers

so largely? Who is it that says to your conscience this day, "Come—come unto Me"?

Reader, you have a right to ask these questions. You live in a lying world. The earth is full of cheats, shams, deceptions, impostors, and falsehoods. The value of a promissory note depends entirely on the name which is signed at the bottom. When you hear of a mighty Promiser you have a right to say, Who is this? and what is His name?

The Speaker of the invitation before you is the greatest and best Friend that man has ever had. It is the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God.

He is One who is **almighty**. He is God the Father's Fellow and equal; He is truly and fully God—by Him were all things made. In His hand are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; He has all power in heaven and earth; in Him all fullness dwells. He has the keys of death and hell. He is now the appointed Mediator between God and man—He will one day be the Judge and King of all the earth. Reader, when such a One as this speaks, you may safely trust Him. What He promises He is able to perform.

He is One who is most **loving**. He loved us so—that He left heaven for our sakes, and laid aside for a season, the glory which He had with the Father. He loved us so—that He was born of a woman for our sakes and lived thirty-three years in this sinful world. He loved us so—that He undertook to pay our mighty debt to God, and died upon the cross to make atonement for our sins. Reader, when such a One as this speaks—He deserves a hearing. When He promises a thing, you need not be afraid to trust him.

He is One who **knows** the heart of man most thoroughly. He took on Him a body like our own, and was made like man in all things, sin only excepted. He knows by experience what man has to go through. He has tasted poverty, and weariness, and hunger, and thirst, and pain, and temptation. He is acquainted with all our conditions upon earth; He has "suffered Himself being tempted." Reader, when such a One as this makes an offer, He makes it with perfect wisdom. He knows exactly what you and I need.

He is One who never breaks His **word**. He always fulfils His promises—He never fails to do what He undertakes. He never disappoints the soul that trusts Him. Mighty as He is, there is one thing which He cannot do—it is impossible for Him to lie. Reader, when such a One as this makes a promise, you need not doubt that He will stand to it. You may depend with confidence on His word.

Reader, you have now heard who sends you the invitation which is before you today. It is the Lord Jesus Christ. Give Him the credit due to His name—grant Him a full and impartial hearing. Believe that a promise from His month deserves your best attention—see that you refuse not Him who speaks. It is written, "If they escaped not who refused Him who spoke on earth—much more shall not we escape, if we refuse Him who speaks from heaven." (Heb. 12:25.)

II. I will now show you, in the second place, to WHOM the invitation before you is addressed.

The Lord Jesus addresses "all who labor and are heavy-laden." The expression is deeply comforting and instructive. It is wide, sweeping, and comprehensive. It describes the ease of millions in every part of the world.

Where are the laboring and heavy-laden? They are everywhere—they are a multitude that man can scarcely number; they are to be found in every climate, and in every country under the sun. They live in Europe, in Asia, in Africa, and in America; they dwell by the banks of the Seine, as well as the banks of the Thames; by the banks of the Mississippi as well as the banks of the Niger. They abound under republics as well as under monarchies; under liberal governments as well as under despotism. Everywhere you will find trouble, care, sorrow, anxiety, murmuring, discontent, and unrest. What does it mean? What does it all come to? Men are "laboring and heavy-laden."

To what **class** do the laboring and heavy-laden belong to? They belong to every class—there is no exception. They are to be found among masters as well as among servants; among rich as well as among poor; among kings as well as among subjects; among learned as well as among ignorant people. In every class you will find trouble, care, sorrow, anxiety, murmuring, discontent, and unrest. What does it mean? What does it all come to? Men are "laboring and heavy-laden."

Reader, how shall we explain this? What is the **cause** of the state of things which I have just tried to describe? Did God create man at the beginning to be unhappy? Most certainly not! Are human governments to blame because men are not happy? At most to a very slight extent. The fault lies far too deep to be reached by human laws. There is another cause, a cause which many unhappily refuse to see—that cause is SIN.

Reader, sin and departure from God, are the true reasons why men are everywhere laboring and heavy-laden. Sin is the universal disease which infects the whole earth. Sin brought in thorns and thistles at the beginning, and obliged man to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow; sin is the reason why the whole creation groans and travails in pain, and the foundations of the earth are out of course; sin is the cause of all the burdens which now press down mankind. Most men know it not, and weary themselves in vain to explain the state of things among them. But sin is the great root and foundation of all sorrow, whatever proud man may think. How much men ought to hate sin!

Reader, are you one of those who are laboring and heavy-laden? I think it very likely that you are. I am firmly persuaded that there are thousands of men and women in the world who are inwardly uncomfortable; and yet will not confess it. They feel a burden on their hearts, which they would gladly get rid of; and yet they do not know the way. They have a conviction that all is not right in their inward man, which they never tell to anyone. Husbands do not tell it to their wives, and wives do not tell it to their husbands; children do not tell it to their parents, and friends do not tell it to their friends; but the inward burden lies heavily on many hearts! *There is far more unhappiness than the world sees!* Disguise it as some will, there are multitudes uncomfortable because they know they are not prepared to meet God; and you, who are reading this tract, perhaps are one.

Reader, if you are laboring and heavy-laden, you are the very person to whom the Lord Jesus Christ sends an invitation this day. If you have an aching heart, and a sore conscience; if you want rest for a weary soul, and know not where to find it; if you want peace for a guilty heart, and are at a loss which way to turn; you are the man, you are the woman, to whom Jesus speaks today. There is hope for you. I bring you good tidings. "Come unto Me," says Jesus, "and I will give you rest."

You may tell me this invitation cannot be meant for you, because you are not *good enough* to be invited by Christ. I answer, that

Jesus does not speak to the good, but to the laboring and heavy-laden. Do you know anything of this feeling? Then you are one to whom He speaks.

You may tell me that the invitation cannot be meant for you, because you are a sinner, and know nothing about religion. I answer, that it matters nothing what you are, or what you have been. Do you at this moment feel laboring and heavy-laden? Then you are one to whom Jesus speaks.

You may tell me that you cannot think the invitation is meant for you, because you are not yet converted, and have not got a new heart. I answer, that Christ's invitation is not addressed to the converted, but to the laboring and heavy laden. Is this what you feel? Is there any burden on your heart? Then you are one of those to whom Christ speaks.

You may tell me that you have no right to accept this invitation, because you do not know that you are one of God's elect. I answer, that you have no right to put words in Christ's mouth, which God has not used—He does not say, "Come unto Me, all you that are elect." He addresses all the laboring and heavy laden ones, without any exception. Are you one of them? Is there weight within on your soul? This is the only question you have to decide. If you are, you are one of these to whom Christ speaks.

Reader, if you are one of the laboring and heavy-laden ones, once more I entreat you not to refuse the invitation which I bring you today. Do not forsake your own mercies. The harbor of refuge is freely before you—do not turn away from it. The best of Friends holds out His hand to you—let not pride, or self-righteousness, or fear of man's ridicule, make you reject His offered love. Take Him at His word. Say to Him, "Lord Jesus Christ, I am one of those whom Your invitation suits—I am laboring and heavy-laden. Lord, what will You have me to do?"

III. I will now show you in the third place, what the Lord Jesus Christ asks you to do. Three words make up the sum and substance of the invitation which He sends you today. If you are laboring and heavy-laden, Jesus says, *"Come unto Me!"*

Reader, there is a grand simplicity about the three words now before you. Short and plain as the sentence seems, it contains a mine of deep truth and solid comfort. Weigh it—look at it—consider it—ponder it well. I believe that it is one half of saving Christianity, to understand what Jesus means when He says, "Come unto Me."

Mark well, that the Lord Jesus does not bid the laboring and heavy-laden "go and work." Those words would carry no comfort to heavy consciences—it would be like requiring labor from an exhausted man. No! He bids them "Come!" He does not say, "Pay Me what you owe." That demand would drive a broken heart into despair—it would be like claiming a debt from a ruined bankrupt. No! He says, "Come!" He does not say, "Stand still and wait." That command would only be a mockery—it would be like promising to give medicine at the end of a week to one at the point of death." No—He says, "Come!" Today; at once; without any delay, *"Come unto Me!"*

But, after all, what is meant by coming to Christ? It is an expression often used, but often misunderstood. Beware that you make no mistake at this point. Here, unhappily, thousands turn aside out of the right course, and miss the truth. Beware that you do not make shipwreck at the very mouth of the harbor.

Take notice, that coming to Christ means something more than coming to church and chapel. You may fill your place regularly at a place of worship; and attend all outward means of grace, and yet not be saved. All this is not coming to Christ.

Take notice, that coming to Christ is something more than coming to the Lord's table. You may be a regular member and communicant; you may never be missing in the lists of those who eat that bread and drink that wine, which the Lord commanded to be received, and yet never be saved. All this is not coming to Christ.

Take notice, that coming to Christ is something more than coming to ministers. You may be a constant hearer of some popular preacher, and a zealous partizan of all his opinions, and yet never be saved. All this is not coming to Christ.

Take notice, once more, that coming to Christ is something more than coming to the possession of head-knowledge about Him. You may know the whole system of Evangelical doctrine, and be able to talk, argue, and dispute on every jot of it, and yet never be saved. All this is not coming to Christ.

Coming to Christ is coming to Him with the heart by simple faith. Believing on Christ is coming to Him, and coming to Christ is believing on Him. It is that act of the soul which takes place when a man, feeling his own sins, and despairing of all other hope, commits himself to Christ for salvation, ventures on Him, trusts Him, and casts himself wholly on Him. When a man turns to Christ empty—that he may be filled; sick—that he may be healed; hungry—that he may be satisfied; thirsty—that he may be refreshed; needy—that he may be enriched; dying—that he may have life; lost—that he may be saved; guilty—that he may be pardoned; sin-defiled—that he may be cleansed; confessing that Christ alone can supply his need—then he comes to Christ. When he uses Christ as the Jews used the city of refuge, as the starving Egyptians used Joseph, as the dying Israelites used the brazen serpent; then he comes to Christ. It is the empty soul's venture on a full Savior; it is the drowning man's grasp on the hand held out to help him; it is the sick man's reception of a healing medicine. This, and nothing more than this, is coming to Christ.

Hearken, my beloved reader, whoever you may be, listen to a word of caution. Beware of mistakes as to this matter of coming to Christ. Do not stop short in any half-way house; do not allow the devil and the world to cheat you out of eternal life; do not suppose that you will ever get any good from Christ, unless you go straight, direct, thoroughly, and entirely to Christ Himself. Trust not in a little outward formality—content not yourself with a regular use of outward means. A lantern is an excellent help in a dark night, but it is not home. Just so, means of grace are useful aids, but they are not Christ. Oh, no! Press onward, forward, upward, until you have had personal, business-like dealings with Christ Himself.

Hearken again, my beloved reader. Beware of mistakes as to the manner of coming to Christ. Dismiss from your mind forever all idea of worthiness, merit, and fitness in yourself; throw away all notions of goodness, righteousness, and deserts. Do not think that you can bring anything to recommend you, or to make you deserving of Christ's notice. You must come to Him as a poor, guilty undeserving sinner, or you might just as well not come at all. "To him that works not but believes on Him that justifies the ungodly, his faith is

counted for righteousness." (Romans 4. 5.) It is the peculiar mark of the faith which justifies and saves—that it brings to Christ nothing but an empty hand.

Hearken once more, my beloved reader. Let there be no mistake in your mind as to the special **character of the man who has come to Christ, and is a true Christian**. He is not an angel; he is not a half-angelic being, in whom is no weakness, or blemish, or infirmity—he is nothing of the kind. *He is nothing more than a sinner who has found out his sinfulness, and has learned the blessed secret of living by faith in Christ.* What was the glorious company of the apostles and prophets? What was the noble army of martyrs? What were Isaiah, Daniel, Peter, James, John, Paul, Polycarp, Chrysostom, Augustine, Luther, Ridley, Latimer, Bunyan, Baxter, Whitefield, Venn, Chalmers, Bickersteth, M'Cheyne? What were they all, but sinners who knew and felt their sins, and trusted only in Christ? What were they, but men who accepted the invitation I bring you this day, and came to Christ by faith? By this faith they lived—in this faith they died. In themselves and their doings they saw nothing worth mentioning; but in Christ they saw all that their souls required.

Reader, the invitation of Christ is now before you. If you never listened to it before, listen to it today. Broad, full, free, wide, simple, tender, kind; that invitation will leave you without excuse if you refuse to accept it. There are some invitations, perhaps, which it is wiser and better to decline. There is one which ought always to be accepted—that one is before you today. Jesus Christ is saying, *"Come—come unto Me!"*

IV. I will now show you, in the last place—what the Lord Jesus Christ promises to give. He does not ask the laboring and heavy-laden to come to Him for nothing. He holds out gracious inducements; He allures them by sweet offers. "Come unto Me," He says, "and I will give you *rest*."

Rest is a pleasant thing. Few are the men and women in this weary world, who do not know the sweetness of it. The man who has been laboring hard with his hands all the week, working in iron, or brass, or stone, or wood, or clay; digging, lifting, hammering, cutting—he knows the comfort of going home on Saturday night, and having one day of rest. The man who has been toiling hard with his head all day; writing, copying, calculating, composing, sketching, planning—he knows the comfort of laying aside his papers and having a little rest. Yes—rest is a pleasant thing.

Rest is one of the principal offers which the *world* promises, "Come to me—and I will give you riches and pleasure." "Come with me," says the *devil*, "and I will give you greatest, power, and wisdom." "Come unto Me," says the Lord Jesus Christ, "and I will give you rest."

But what is the nature of that rest which the Lord Jesus promises to give? It is no mere repose of body. A man may have that and yet be miserable. You may place him in a palace, and surround him with every possible comfort; you may give him money in abundance, and everything that money can buy; you may free him from all care about tomorrow's bodily needs; and take away the need of laboring for a single hour—all this you may do to a man, and yet not give him true rest. Thousands know this too well by bitter experience. Their hearts are starving in the midst of worldly plenty; their inward man is sick and weary, while their outward man is clothed in purple and fine linen, and fares sumptuously every day! Yes—a man may have houses, and lands, and money, and horses, and carriages, and soft beds, and good fare, and attentive servants—and yet not have true rest!

The rest that Christ gives—is an *inward* thing. It is rest of heart, rest of conscience, rest of mind, rest of affection, rest of will. It is rest from a comfortable sense of sins being all forgiven and guilt all put away; it is rest from a solid hope of good things to come, laid up beyond the reach of disease, and death, and the grave; it is rest from the well-grounded feeling—that the great business of life is settled, its great end provided for, that in *time* all is well done, and in *eternity* heaven will be our home.

Rest such as this, the Lord Jesus gives to those who come to Him, by showing them His own finished work on the cross, by clothing them in His own perfect righteousness, and washing them in His own precious blood. When a man begins to see that the Son of God actually died for his sins, his soul begins to taste something of inward quiet and peace.

Rest such as this, the Lord Jesus gives to those who come to Him, by revealing Himself as their ever-living High Priest in heaven, and God reconciled to them through Him. When a man begins to see that the Son of God actually lives to intercede for him, he will begin to feel something of inward quiet and peace.

Rest such as this, the Lord Jesus gives to those who come to Him, by implanting His Spirit in their hearts, and witnessing with their spirits that they are God's children. They find that old things are passed away, and all things are become new. When a man begins to feel an inward drawing towards God as a father, and a sense of being an adopted and forgiven child, his soul begins to feel something of quiet and peace.

Rest such as this, the Lord Jesus gives to those who come to Him, by dwelling in their hearts as King, by putting all things within in order, and giving to each faculty its place and work. When a man begins to find order in his heart in place of rebellion and confusion, his soul begins to understand something of quiet and peace. There is no true inward happiness until the true King is on the throne.

Rest such as this, is the privilege of all believers in Christ. Some know more of it—and some less; some feel it only at distant intervals—and some feel it almost always; few enjoy the sense of it without many a battle with unbelief, and many a conflict with fear—but all who truly come to Christ, know *something* of this rest. Ask them, with all their complaints and doubts, whether they would give up Christ and go back to the world. You will get only one answer. Weak as their sense of rest may be, they have got hold of something which does them good, and that something they cannot let go.

Rest such as this, is within reach of all who are willing to seek it and receive it. The poor man is not so poor—but he may have it; the ignorant man is not so ignorant—but he may know it; the sick man is not so weak and helpless—but he may get hold of it. Faith, simple faith, is the one thing needful in order to possess Christ's rest. *Faith in Christ is the grand secret of happiness!* Neither poverty, nor ignorance, nor tribulation, nor distress can prevent men and women feeling rest of soul—if they will only come to Christ and believe.

Rest such as this, is the possession which makes men independent of all the fluctuations of life. Banks may break, and money make

itself wings and flee away; war, pestilence, and famine may break in, and the foundations of the earth be out of course; health and vigor may depart, and the body be crushed down by loathsome disease; death may cut down wife, and children, and friends, until he who once enjoyed them stands entirely alone. But the man who has come to Christ by faith will still possess something which can never he taken from him. Like Paul and Silas, he will sing in prison; like Job, bereaved of children and property, he will bless the name of the Lord. He is the truly independent man—who possesses that which nothing can take away!

Rest such as this, is the possession which makes men *truly rich!* It lasts; it wears; it endures; it lightens the solitary home; it smoothes the dying pillow; it goes with men when they are placed in their coffins; it abides with them when they are laid in their graves. When friends can no longer help us, and money is no longer of use; when doctors can no longer relieve our pain, and nurses can no longer minister to our needs; when sense begins to fail, and eye and ear can no longer do their duty; then, even then, the "rest" which Christ gives will be shed abroad in the heart of the believer. The words "rich" and "poor" will change their meaning entirely one day. He is the only rich man—who has come to Christ by faith, and from Christ has received rest.

Reader, this is the rest which Christ offers to give to all who are laboring and heavy-laden; this is the rest for which He invites them to come to Him; this is the rest which I want you to enjoy, and to which I bring you an invitation this day. May God grant that the invitation may not be brought to you in vain!

1. Reader, do you know anything of the "rest" of which I have been speaking? If not, what have you got from your religion? You live in a Christian land; you profess and call yourself a Christian; you have probably attended a Christian place of worship many years—you would not like to be called an infidel or a heathen. Yet all this time what benefit have you received from your Christianity? What solid advantage have you obtained from it? For anything one can see, you might just as well have been a Turk or a Jew.

Take advice this day, and resolve to possess the *realities* of Christianity, as well as the *name*; and the *substance*, as well as the *form*. Do not be content until you know something of the peace, and hope, and joy, and consolation which Christians enjoyed in former times. Ask yourself what is the reason that you are a stranger to the feelings which men and women experienced in the days of the Apostles—ask yourself why you do not "joy in the Lord," and feel "peace with God," like the Romans and Philippians, to whom Paul wrote. Religious feelings, no doubt, are often deceptive; but surely the religion which produces no feelings at all—is not the religion of the New Testament. The religion which gives a man no inward comfort—can never be a religion from God. Reader, take heed to yourself. Never be satisfied until you know something of the "rest that is in Christ."

2. Reader, do you desire rest of soul, and yet know not where to turn for it? Remember this day, that there is only one place where it can be found. Governments cannot give it; education will not impart it; wordily amusements cannot supply it; money will not purchase it. It can only be found in the hand of Jesus Christ; and to His hand you must turn, if you would find peace within.

There is no royal road to rest of soul. Let that never be forgotten. There is only one way to the Father—Jesus Christ. There is only one door into heaven—Jesus Christ. There is only one path to heart peace—Jesus Christ. By that way all laboring and heavy-laden ones must go, whatever be their rank or condition. Kings in their palaces, and paupers in the workhouse, are all on a level in this matter. All alike must come to Christ, if they feel soul-weary and tired; all must drink of the same fountain, if they would have their thirst relieved.

You may not believe what I am now writing. Time will show who is right and who is wrong. Go on, if you will, imagining that true happiness is to be found in the good things of this world. Seek it, if you will, in reveling and banqueting, in dancing and merry making. In races and theaters, in sports and cards. Seek it, if you will, in reading and scientific pursuits, in music and painting, in politics and business. Seek it—but you will never find it, unless you change your plan. Real heart-rest is never to be found except in heart-union with Jesus Christ. There is no true rest for any one, excepting in Christ! Happy will it be for your soul if that lesson is never forgotten!

3. Reader, do you desire to possess the rest that Christ alone can give, and yet feel afraid to seek it? I beseech you, as a friend to your soul, to cast this needless fears away. For what did Christ die on the cross—if not to save sinners? For what does He sit at the right hand of God—if not to receive and intercede for sinners? When Christ invites you so plainly, and promises so freely—why should you rob your own soul, and refuse to come to Him?

Who, among all the readers of this tract, desires to be saved by Christ, and yet is not saved at present? Come, I beseech—you come to Christ without delay! Though you have been a great sinner, COME! Though you have long resisted warnings, counsels, sermons, COME! Though you have sinned against light and knowledge, against a father's advice and a mother's tears, COME! Though you have plunged into every excess of wickedness, and lived without prayer, yet COME! The door is not shut, the fountain is not yet closed. Jesus Christ invites you. It is enough that you feel laboring and heavy-laden, and desire to be saved. Come—come to Christ without delay!

Come to Him by faith, and pour out your heart before Him in prayer. Tell Him the whole story of your life, and ask Him to receive you. Cry to Him as the penitent thief did, when he saw Him on the cross. Say to Him, "Lord, save me also! Lord, remember me!" COME—COME TO CHRIST!

Reader, if you have never come to this point yet, you must come to it at last, if you mean to be saved. You must apply to Christ as a sinner; you must have personal dealings with the great Physician, and apply to Him for a cure. Why not do it at once? Why not this very day accept the great invitation? Once more, I repeat my exhortation. COME—COME TO CHRIST WITHOUT DELAY!

4. Reader, have you found the rest which Christ gives? Have you tasted true peace by coming to him and casting your soul on him? Then go on to the end of your days as you have begun, looking to Jesus and living upon Him. Go on drawing daily full supplies of rest, peace, mercy, and grace from the great fountain of rest and peace. Remember that, if you live to the age of Methuselah, you will never be anything but a poor empty sinner, owing all you have and hope for to Christ alone.

Never be ashamed of living the life of faith in Christ. Men may ridicule and mock you, and even silence you in argument; but they can never take from you the feelings which faith in Christ gives. They can never prevent you feeling, "I was *weary* until I found Christ—but now I have rest of conscience. I was *blind*—but now I see. I was *dead*—but I am alive again. I was *lost*—but I am found."

Invite all around you to come to Christ. Use every lawful effort to bring father, mother, husband, wife, children, brothers, sisters, friends, relatives, companions, fellow-workmen; to bring all and every one to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus. Spare no pains. *Speak to them about Christ—speak to Christ about them*. Be instant in season, out of season. Say to them, as Moses did to Hobab, "Come with us—and we will do you good!" The more you work for the souls of others, the more blessing will you get for your own soul.

Last, but not least, look forward with confidence to a better rest in a world to come. Yet in a little while, and He who shall come, will come, and will not tarry. He will gather together all who have believed in Him, and take His people to a home where the wicked shall cease from troubling, and the weary shall be at perfect rest. He shall give them a glorious body, in which they shall serve Him without distraction, and praise Him without weariness. He shall wipe away tears from all faces, and make all things new. (Isa. 35:8.)

There is a good time coming for all who have come to Christ and committed their souls into His keeping. They shall remember all the ways by which they have been led, and see the wisdom of every step in the way; they all wonder that they ever doubted the kindness and love of their Shepherd—above all, they shall wonder that they could live so long without Him, and that when they heard of Him they could hesitate about coming to Him.

There is a pass in Scotland called Glencoe, which supplies a beautiful illustration of what heaven will be to the man who comes to Christ. The road through Glencoe carries the traveler up a long and steep ascent, with many a little winding and many a little turn in its course. But when the top of the pass is reached, a stone is seen by the wayside, with these simple words engraved on it, "Rest, and be thankful." Reader, those words describe the feelings with which every one who comes to Christ will at length enter heaven. The summit of the narrow way will be won—we shall cease from our weary journeying, and sit down in the kingdom of God; we shall look back over all the way of life with thankfulness, and see the perfect wisdom of every little winding and turn in the steep ascent by which we were led; we shall forget the toils of the upward journey in the glorious rest. Here in this world, our sense of rest in Christ at best is feeble and partial; but, "when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away." Thanks be unto God, a day is coming when believers shall rest perfectly, and be thankful.

Reader, the invitation is now before you. Will you accept it? *"Come unto Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden--and I will give you rest."*

Are You Born Again?

by J. C. Ryle

Are you born again? This is one of life's most important questions. Jesus Christ said, "Except a man is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3).

It is not enough to reply, "I belong to the church; I suppose I'm a Christian." Thousands of nominal Christians show none of the signs of being born again which the Scriptures have given us—many listed in the First Epistle of John.

1. No Habitual Sinning

"No one who is born of God will *continue* to sin" (1 John 3:9). "We know that anyone born of God does not *continue* to sin" (5:18).

A person who has been born again, or regenerated, does not *habitually* commit sin. He no longer sins with his *heart* and *will* and *whole inclination*. There was probably a time when he did not think about whether his actions were sinful or not, and he did not always feel grieved after doing evil. There was no quarrel between him and sin; they were friends. But the true Christian--hates sin, flees from it, fights against it, considers it his greatest plague, resents the burden of its presence, mourns when he falls under its influence, and longs to be completely delivered from it. Sin no longer pleases him, nor is it even a matter of indifference to him; it has become a horrible thing which he hates. However, he cannot eliminate its presence within him.

If he said that he had no sin, he would be lying (1 John 1:8). But he can say that he *hates* sin--and that the great desire of his soul is not to commit sin at all. He cannot prevent bad thoughts from entering his mind, or shortcomings, omissions, and defects from appealing in both his words and his actions. He knows that "we all stumble in many ways" (James 3:2). But he can truly say, in the sight of God, that these things cause him grief and sorrow, and that his whole nature does not consent to them. What would the apostle say about you? Are *you* born again?

2. Believing in Christ

"Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God" (1 John 5:1).

A man who is born again, or regenerated, believes that Jesus Christ is the only Savior who can pardon his soul--that He is the divine person appointed by God the Father for this very purpose--and besides Him, there is no Savior at all. In himself, he sees nothing but unworthiness. But he has full confidence in Christ, and trusting in Him, he believes that his sins are all forgiven. He believes that, because he has accepted Christ's finished work and death on the cross, he is considered righteous in God's sight, and he may look forward to death and judgment without alarm.

He may have fears and doubts. He may sometimes tell you that he feels as if he had no faith at all. But ask him if he is willing to trust in anything instead of Christ--and see what he will say. Ask him if he will rest his hope of eternal life on his own goodness--his own works, his prayers, his minister, or his church--and listen to his reply. What would the apostle say about you? Are *you* born again?

3. Practicing Righteousness

"Everyone that does righteousness is born of Him" (1 John 2:29).

The man who is born again, or regenerated, is a *holy* man. He endeavors to live according to God's will--to do the things that please God--and to avoid the things that God hates. He wishes to continually look to Christ as his *example,* as well as his *Savior*--and to prove himself to be Christ's friend, by doing whatever He commands. He knows he is not perfect. He is painfully aware of his indwelling corruption. He finds an evil principle within himself, which is constantly warring against grace and trying to draw him away from God. But he does not *consent* to it, though he cannot prevent its *presence*.

Though he may sometimes feel so low that he questions whether or not he is a Christian at all, he will be able to say with John Newton, "I am not what I *ought* to be, I am not what I *want* to be, I am not what I *hope* to be in the eternal world. But still--I am not what I once *used* to be! By the grace of God I am what I am." What would the apostle say about you? Are *you* born again?

4. Loving Other Christians

"We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren" (1 John 3:14).

A man who is born again has a special love for all true disciples of Christ. Like his Father in heaven, he loves all men with a great *general* love; but he has a *special* love for those who share his faith in Christ. Like his Lord and Savior, he loves the worst of sinners and could weep over them; but he has a *peculiar* love for those who are believers. He is never so much at home, as when he is in their company.

He feels they are all members of the same family. They are his fellow soldiers, fighting against the same enemy. They are his fellow travelers, journeying along the same road. He understands them, and they understand him. They may be very different from himself in many ways—in rank, in station and in wealth. But that does not matter. They are his Father's sons and daughters--and he cannot help loving them. What would the apostle say about you? Are *you* born again?

5. Overcoming the World

"Everyone born of God overcomes the world" (1 John 5:4).

A man who is born again, does not use the world's *opinion* as his standard of right and wrong. He does not mind going against the world's ways, ideas and customs. What men think or say no longer concerns him. He overcomes the *love* of the world. He finds no pleasure in things which seem to bring happiness to most people. To him they seem foolish and unworthy of an immortal being.

He loves God's *praise* more than man's praise. He fears offending God more than offending man. It is unimportant to him whether he is blamed or praised; his first aim is to please God. What would the apostle say about you? Are *you* born again?

6. Keeping Oneself Pure

"He who is begotten of God keeps himself' (1 John 5:18).

A man who is born again is careful of his own soul. He tries not only to avoid sin--but also to avoid everything which may lead to it. He is careful about the company he keeps. He knows that "bad company corrupts good morals" and that evil is more contagious than good, just as disease is more infectious than health. He is careful about the use of his time; his chief desire is to spend it profitable.

He desires to live like a soldier in an enemy country—to wear his armor continually and to be prepared for temptation. He is diligent to be a watchful, humble, prayerful man. What would the apostle say about you? Are you born again?

These are the six great marks of a born again Christian.

There is a vast difference in the *depth* and *distinctness* of these marks in different people. In some they are faint and hardly noticeable. In others they are bold, plain and unmistakable, so anyone may read them. Some of these marks are more visible than others in each individual. Seldom are all equally evident in any one person.

But still, after every allowance, here we find boldly painted--six marks of being born of God.

How should we react to these things? We can logically come to only one conclusion—only those who are born again have these six characteristics, and those who do not have these marks are not born again. This seems to be the conclusion to which the apostle intended us to come. Do you have these characteristics? Are *you* born again?

CALVARY!

by J. C. Ryle

You probably know that Calvary was a place close to Jerusalem, where the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was crucified. We know nothing else about Calvary beside this. I call this tract "Calvary," because I am going to speak to you about the sufferings and crucifixion of Christ.

I am afraid that much ignorance prevails among people on the subject of Jesus Christ's sufferings. I suspect that many see no peculiar glory and beauty in the history of the crucifixion: on the contrary; they think it painful, humbling, and degrading. They do not see much profit in the story of Christ's death and sufferings: they rather turn from it as an unpleasant thing.

Now I believe that such people are quite wrong. I cannot agree with them. I believe it is an excellent thing for us all to be continually

dwelling on the crucifixion of Christ. That is a good thing to be often reminded how Jesus was betrayed into the hands of wicked men,-how they condemned Him with most unjust judgment,-how they spit on Him, scourged Him, beat Him, and crowned Him with thorns,-how they led Him forth as a lamb to the slaughter, without His murmuring or resisting, -how they drove the nails through His hands and feet, and set Him on Calvary between two thieves, how they pierced His side with a spear, mocked Him in His suffering, and let Him hang there naked and bleeding until He died. Of all these things, I say, it is good to be reminded. It is not for nothing that the crucifixion is described four times over in the New Testament. There are very few things that all the four writers of the Gospel describe: generally speaking, if Matthew, Mark, and Luke tell a thing in our Lord's history, John does not tell it; but there is one thing that all the four give us most fully, and that one thing is the story of the cross. This is a telling fact, and not to be overlooked.

People seem to me to forget that all Christ's sufferings at Calvary were fore-ordained. They did not come on Him by chance or accident: they were all planned, counseled, and determined from all eternity; the cross was foreseen, in all the provisions of the everlasting Trinity for the salvation of sinners. In the purposes of God the cross was set up from everlasting. Not one throb of pain did Jesus feel, not one precious drop of blood did Jesus shed, which had not been appointed long ago. Infinite wisdom planned that redemption should be by the cross: infinite wisdom brought Jesus to the cross in due time. He was crucified by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.

People seem to me to forget that all Christ's sufferings at Calvary were necessary for man's salvation. He had to bear our sins, if ever they were to be borne at all: with His stripes alone could we be healed. This was the one payment of our debts that God would accept; this was the great sacrifice on which our eternal life depended. If Christ had not gone to the cross and suffered in our stead, the just for the unjust, there would not have been a spark of hope for us; there would have been a mighty gulf between ourselves and God, which no man ever could have passed. The cross was necessary, in order that there might be an atonement for sin.

People seem to me to forget that all Christ's sufferings were endured voluntary and of His own free will. He was under no compulsion: of His own choice He laid down His life: of His own choice He went to Calvary to finish the work He came to do. He might easily have summoned legions of angels with a word, and scattered Pilate and Herod, and all their armies, like chaff before the wind; but He was a willing sufferer: His heart was set on the salvation of sinners. He was resolved to open a fountain for all sin and uncleanness, by shedding His own blood.

Reader, when I think of all this, I see nothing painful or disagreeable in the subject of Christ's crucifixion; on the contrary, I see in it wisdom and power, peace and hope, joy and gladness, comfort and consolation. The more I keep the cross in my mind's eye, the more fullness I seem to discern in it; the longer I dwell on the crucifixion in my thoughts, the more I am satisfied that there is more to he learned at Calvary than anywhere else in the world.

Would I know the length and breadth of God the Father's love towards a sinful world? Where shall I see it most displayed? Shall I look at His glorious sun, shining down daily on the unthankful and evil? Shall I look at the seed time and harvest, returning in regular yearly succession? Oh, no! I can find a stronger proof of love than anything of this sort. I look at the cross of Christ: I see in it not the cause of the Father's love, but the effect. There I see that God so loved this wicked world, that He gave His only begotten Son,-gave Him to suffer and die-that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. I know that the Father loves us, because He did not withhold from us His Son, His only Son. Ah, reader, I might sometimes fancy that God the Father is too high and holy to care for such miserable, corrupt creatures as we are: but I cannot, must not, dare not think it, when I look at Christ's sufferings on Calvary.

Would I know how exceedingly sinful and abominable sin is in the sight of God? Where shall I see that most fully brought out? Shall I turn to the history of the flood, and read how sin drowned the world? Shall I go to the shore of the Dead Sea, and mark what sin brought on Sodom and Gomorrah? Shall I turn to the wandering Jews, and observe how sin has scattered them over the face of the earth? No: I can find a clearer proof still, I look at what happened on Calvary. There I see that sin is so black and damnable that nothing but the blood of God's own Son can wash it away; there I see that sin has so separated me from my holy Maker that all the angels in heaven could never have made peace between us: nothing could reconcile us, short of the death of Christ. Ah, if I listened to the wretched talk of proud men I might sometimes fancy sin was not so very sinful; but I cannot think little of sin when I look at Calvary.

Would I know the fullness and completeness of the salvation God has provided for sinners? Where shall I see it most distinctly? Shall I go to the general declarations in the Bible about God's mercy? Shall I rest in the general truth that God is a God of love? Oh, no! I will look at the crucifixion at Calvary. I find no evidence like that: I find no balm for a sore conscience and a troubled heart like the sight of Jesus dying for me on the accursed tree. There I see that a full payment has been made for all my enormous debts. The curse of that law which I have broken, has come down on One who there suffered in my stead; the demands of that law are all satisfied: payment has been made for me even to the uttermost farthing. It will not be required twice over. Ah, I might sometimes imagine I was too bad to be forgiven; my own heart sometimes whispers that I am too wicked to be saved. But I know in my better moments this is all my foolish unbelief; I read an answer to my doubts in the blood shed on Calvary. I feel sure that there is a way to heaven for the very vilest of men, when I look at the cross.

Would I find strong reasons for being a holy man? Where shall I turn for them? Shall I listen to the ten commandments merely? Shall I study the examples given me in the Bible of what grace can do? Shall I meditate on the rewards of heaven, and the punishments of hell? Is there no stronger motive still? Yes: I will look at Calvary and the crucifixion. There I see the love of Christ constraining me to live not unto myself, but unto Him: there I see that I am not my own now,-I am bought with a price: I am bound by the most solemn obligations to glorify Jesus with body and spirit, which are His. There I see that Jesus gave Himself for me, not only to redeem me from iniquity, but also to purify me, and make me one of a peculiar people, zealous of good works. He bore my sins in His own body on the tree, that I being dead unto sin should live unto righteousness. Ah, reader, there is nothing so sanctifying as a clear view of the cross of Christ! It crucifies the world unto us, and us unto the world. How can we love sin when we remember that because of our sins Jesus died? Surely none ought to be so holy as the disciples of a crucified Lord.

Would I learn how to be contented and cheerful under all the cares and anxieties of life? What school shall I go to? How shall I attain this state of mind most easily? Shall I look at the sovereignty of God, the wisdom of God, the providence of God, the love of God? It is well to do so: but I have a better argument still. I will look at Calvary and the crucifixion. I feel that He who spared not His only

begotten Son but delivered Him up to die for me, will surely with Him give me all things that I really need: He who endured that pain for my soul, will surely not withhold from me anything that is really good: He who has done the greater things for me, will doubtless do the lesser things also. He who gave His own blood to procure me a home, will unquestionably supply me with all that is really profitable for me by the way. Ah, reader, there is no school for learning contentment that can be compared with Calvary and the foot of the cross.

Would I gather arguments for hoping that I shall never be cast away? Where shall I go to find them? Shall I look at my own graces and gifts? Shall I take comfort in my own faith and love, and penitence and zeal, and prayer? Shall I turn to my own heart, and say, "This same heart will never be false and cold"? Oh, no! God forbid! I will look at Calvary and the crucifixion. This is my grand argument: this is my mainstay. I cannot think that He who went through such sufferings to redeem my soul, will let that soul perish after all, when it has once cast itself on Him. Oh, no! What Jesus paid for Jesus will surely keep. He paid dearly for it: He will not let it easily be lost. He died for me when I was yet a dark sinner: He will never forsake me after I have believed. Ah, reader, when Satan tempts you to doubt whether Christ's people will be kept from falling, you should tell Satan that you cannot despair when you look at the cross. And now, reader, will you marvel when I say that all Christians ought to make much of the crucifixion? Will you not rather wonder that any can hear of Christ's sufferings on Calvary and remain unmoved? I declare I know no greater proof of man's depravity than the fact that thousands of so-called Christians see nothing lovely in the cross. Well may our hearts be called stony, well may the eyes of our mind be called blind, well may our whole nature be called diseased, well may we all be called dead,-when the cross of Christ is heard of, and yet neglected. Surely we may take up the words of the prophet, and say, "Hear, O heavens, and be astonished, O earth: a wonderful and horrible thing is done," -Christ was crucified for sinners, and yet many Christians live as if He was never crucified at all!

Reader, if you never thought much about Calvary and the crucifixion before,-I trust you will have learned something today.

PROFIT AND LOSS

by J. C. Ryle

"What shall it profit a man, if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?" Mark 8:36

It is a sad proof, beloved, of our evil and corrupt nature, that our Lord Jesus Christ should have thought it necessary to use such language and to ask such a question. He was preaching to His own people—to the children of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to the nation which for fifteen hundred years had alone enjoyed the privilege of knowing the true God. He was not instructing ignorant heathen—but Israelites, to whom pertained the adoption and the glory and the covenant, and the giving of the law and the service of God and the promises; and yet behold—He deals with them as if they had still to learn the first principles of religious knowledge, "What shall it profit a man, if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?"

But it is far more sad, beloved, and far more deplorable, that at the present hour, eighteen hundred years after Jesus died for men, it should still be necessary for a minister of the gospel to urge upon you the very same words. Who, indeed, would have thought it possible that we should be obliged to remind you that the care of the soul is the one thing needful—needful for all: for the rich, because of their temptations; for the poor, because of their trials; for the old, because death is close at hand; for the young, because life with all its intoxicating follies is before them, and they can never have a more convenient season?—to remind you that, although men have different abilities and fill different stations here on earth, they have one thing at least in common, they have ALL immortal souls, they must all give account of themselves at the day of judgment. And yet, "hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth," we are obliged to tell you, professing Christians, all this. I say *obliged*, and is there not a cause? Mark now what I am about to say, and listen to my proofs.

I appeal, then, to your consciences, whether I do not say the truth in Christ, when I declare my belief that the greater number of baptized people are living just as if this world was their abiding home and resting place, and the things of this world their only object—as if there was no such text as "It is appointed unto men once to die—but after this the judgment." As if Jesus had never come down on earth, preached, suffered, died and risen again for human guilt; as if the Bible was a beautiful book—but a thing to be admired and respected more than studied; as if churches and ministers were convenient enough for keeping people in order—but not witnesses of truth and messengers of glad tidings to a lost and ruined creation.

I often observe, when people meet, they ask each other a great deal about their bodily health ("Are you quite well?" they say, "Have you got over that cold—or that fever—or that rheumatism?") but I never yet met with any one who made a point of inquiring about his friend's soul; and yet we are told plainly in the Bible, that the body (comparatively speaking) is vile and perishable—but the soul precious and eternal. Men seem to go blindly forward, intent upon the earth they walk on, and confining all their concerns to the present life. One generation after another is struggling to get on in this world—but few indeed appear to care where they shall be found in the eternal world.

Seeing then, beloved, that these things cannot be spoken against, for who shall dispute them?—seeing that, even in this parish, I have found already, to my deep sorrow, there are some people quite careless and indifferent about religion, some who drink, some who live immoral lives, some who without good reasons attend church only once a week, some who only attend now and then when it is convenient, (think what a profanation for a sinful creature to talk of honoring his Maker and Redeemer and Judge 'when it is convenient'), some who never attend at all, and go nowhere, some who appear to think it no sin to go to sleep and some to talk in God's own house, before the very eyes of Christ who is now in the midst of you! Seeing that these things are so, I feel it my solemn duty, in love and charity towards you, to begin the year by laying open the first foundations of Christian truth. I shall place side by side the world and the soul, and shortly compare their respective value; and if after that you choose to lose your own souls (which God forbid), you shall not say that I did not at least attempt to give you warning. May the Holy Spirit convince you all of the importance of the subject, and give you new hearts, for Christ's sake.

I. What then shall I say of the things of this WORLD, which men appear to think so valuable—money, houses, land, clothes, fine food and drink, learning, honors, titles, pleasures, amusements, and the like? Beloved, I shall say two things.

First, **they are all really worthless!** Capable, no doubt, of being turned to a good use (every creature of God, says the Bible, is good if sanctified by the word of God and prayer)—but I mean this, that if you suppose they are in themselves able to make you really happy, you are woefully deceived! If any unconverted person in this parish could have just as much as he wished of every earthly good thing, he would still find in a very short time that he was not one whit happier than before. They are all comfortless without a new heart and a living faith in Christ Jesus. I dare say you think I am mistaken—but let me tell you that many a rich man has tried the experiment, and can bear witness that the case is so. Many a one could tell you that he seeks out everything which money can purchase, he passes his life in a constant round of amusement and excitement, going from one pleasure to another, and yet he must confess that happiness, and peace of mind has been like a shadow—always before his eyes but never within his grasp!

And if this does not convince you, read the book of Ecclesiastes, and there you will find the deliberate opinion of the wisest man that ever lived—I mean Solomon—and you will see that he put the question to the proof in his own case; and what was the result?

I said to myself, "Go ahead, I will test you with pleasure and enjoy what is good." But it turned out to be futile. I said about laughter, "It is madness," and about pleasure, "What does this accomplish?" I explored with my mind how to let my body enjoy life with wine and how to grasp folly—my mind still guiding me with wisdom—until I could see what is good for people to do under heaven during the few days of their lives. I increased my achievements. I built houses and planted vineyards for myself. I made gardens and parks for myself and planted every kind of fruit tree in them. I constructed reservoirs of water for myself from which to irrigate a grove of flourishing trees. I acquired male and female servants and had slaves who were born in my house. I also owned many herds of cattle and flocks, more than all who were before me in Jerusalem. I also amassed silver and gold for myself, and the treasure of kings and provinces. I gathered male and female singers for myself, and many concubines, the delights of men. Thus, I became great and surpassed all who were before me in Jerusalem; my wisdom also remained with me. All that my eyes desired, I did not deny them. I did not refuse myself any pleasure, for I took pleasure in all my struggles. This was my reward for all my struggles. When I considered all that I had accomplished and what I had labored to achieve, I found everything to be futile and a pursuit of the wind. There was nothing to be gained under the sun." (Ecclesiastes 2:1-11)

Secondly, I say that **all the things of the world are perishable!** Surely, dear friends, this cannot require any evidence. You must have seen with your own eyes that none of the things I have mentioned are sure, lasting, permanent, incorruptible, and to be depended on. Money and property may be lost; health may fail; friends may be deceitful; and unless we can make a covenant with death and hell, we ourselves may suddenly be cut off in the midst of our days and hurried to our final judgement!

Oh, remember the parable in Luke 12:16. We do not read that he was immoral or an evil-liver in any way, yet see the conclusion our Lord draws. There may be times when everything looks bright and sunshiny—but let us not forget the days of darkness, for they shall be many—the days when you shall say in the morning "Would God it were evening," and in the evening "Would God it were morning," for the longer you live the more will you feel the truth of Job's words, "

Man, who is born of a woman, is of few days, and full of trouble. He comes forth like a flower, and is cut down. He also flees like a shadow, and doesn't continue." (14:1, 2). There is hope of a tree, if is be cut down, that it will sprout again—but "man dies and wastes away, yes, man gives up the Spirit, and where is he?" **Such is the world!** "The world and its evil desires are passing away! But the person who does God's will lives forever!" 1 John 2:17

II. And now what shall I say of the SOUL, which people appear to hold so cheap?

First, then, let me tell you that **the soul is the most valuable part of man**, because it is the part in which we differ from the brute creation. The soul is that wonderful principle by which God made a distinction between ourselves and the other works of His hand, for we read that "God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life." And then what was the grand conclusion? "Man became a living soul." It was the soul for which Christ was content to take our nature on Him, and suffer death upon the cross! The soul, of whose interests you are so careless, was the cause which brought Him down from the right hand of God, to give His own blood as the price of its redemption. Think, beloved, I beseech you, what a privilege it must be to have a soul.

I once heard an anecdote of a gentleman who was visiting a large lunatic asylum near London, when he met with a patient who was only out of his mind upon certain subjects, as I daresay you know is sometimes the case; and this poor creature asked him a startling, a most wonderful question. "Sir," he said, "did you say your prayers this morning?" "Yes," was the answer. "Then, sir, I trust you thanked God that you have the use of your reason." Beloved, I wish you to apply this to your own case. Have you ever thanked God that you have got a soul capable of renewal, of regeneration, capable of eternal life? Oh, if you have not, go down upon your knees this day, and acknowledge the mercies you have received, and your own ingratitude and unworthiness.

This leads me to the second thing I have to say about the soul. **It is eternal.** This frail body of ours shall one day perish; the worm shall feed sweetly on it; "ashes to ashes, and dust to dust," will probably be read over the strongest and most lovely in this church! But the soul shall never perish! And when the earth and all that it contains are burning up, the soul shall enter upon a new state of existence, which shall never change, and that state shall be everlasting life or everlasting fire!

Such is the soul, and such is the world; and may we not wonder, with such undeniable facts before us, that any can be found so foolish as to think of the last more than of the first, to cleave to earth and disregard heaven? This is indeed to come down to the level of the beasts that perish, to call the jewel less precious than the case in which it is enclosed! "Why," asks the prophet Isaiah, "do you spend your money for that which is not bread? and your labor for that which satisfies not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat you that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness."

Now, if the heart of man were less deceitful than it is, such general argument might be enough. But I dare not stop here, for it is no light matter—it is your life; and therefore I will bring before your notice the testimony of two most unimpeachable witnesses—the **dying** and the **dead**. Ask them for an answer to the question "What shall it profit a man, if he gains the whole world, and loses his

own soul?" and I would be content to leave the decision of our text in their hands.

Ask **the DYING sinner**; stand by his bedside, and inquire of him, whether it proves a comfortable and supporting thought that he has cared more for the world than for his soul. Perhaps you never saw the deathbed of one who had not got his feet upon the rock. Oh! it is a fearful, an instructive, a soul-moving sight! When the heart begins to beat faintly and the eyes to grow dim, when friends are weeping all around, and human medicines avail no longer, when all the intoxication of worldly pleasure or business is past and far away, when each lies in his own silent chamber, with nothing apparently between himself and God, when something whispers "You shall not come down from that bed on which you are gone up—but shall surely die!"

In that solemn hour, beloved, we have little idea how small appears this earth and how broad eternity; how much the memory of sin improves; how deeply a guilty conscience darkens. You would then hear him acknowledge that his life had been a grand mistake; you would hear him confess that the care of the soul was indeed the one thing needful, and bitterly repent the time he had lost, the opportunities he had neglected, and the instruction he had despised. God grant I may be spared the pain of seeing any of you in such a plight!

And then, beloved, turn to the bedside of one of God's own children in his last moments: you might perhaps observe some few doubts and fears, from a strong sense of his own unworthiness, and a knowledge of his own sinfulness—for Satan is strong and the flesh weak. Though it is far more probable you would hear him say, "For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another!" "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me." But this at least is most certain: you never would hear one single member of Christ declare that he only regretted he had not cared enough about the world; or that he had paid too much attention to the welfare of his own soul.

Let us now examine the witness of the **DEAD** upon this momentous question. Think not that I am going to incur the charge of intruding into things which I have not seen. I shall simply lay before you one of the most remarkable passages in the New Testament, the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. (Luke 16.) The words are so simple that I should only weaken their force if I were to add any comment; I only ask you to remark that little is said about Lazarus, excepting that he was poor, yet we see he was rich in faith and had treasure in heaven. Nothing is said against the rich man: we do not learn that he was immoral or cruel, and yet it is clear he had laid up all his treasure upon earth. "One day the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. And being in torment in Hades, he looked up and saw Abraham a long way off, with Lazarus at his side. 'Father Abraham!' he called out, 'Have mercy on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this flame!'" "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"

Beloved, are not these things written for our learning? Are not these the words of Him who spoke to the world the things which He had heard from His Father? Is it not then an astounding and a horrible thing—that so many of you can live on in utter carelessness about your soul, setting your affections upon things below, giving God your spare time—when you have nothing else to do? But giving all your hearts to that which cannot profit you in this life—and will not deliver you from condemnation in the life to come. "Oh that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!"—for unbelief such as this is astonishing, inexplicable, unaccountable, incomprehensible.

I trust, beloved, I have now proved to you how false and unworthy is the estimate men usually place upon the world, and upon the soul. I have endeavored to show you a more excellent way—but I cannot conclude without supplying a few hints, which may assist each of you in finding out whether he is loving his own soul at this minute or not.

Many a one, I daresay, is disposed to think that all this may be very true—you knew it long ago—but it does not apply to yourself. You now wish your soul to be saved.

You wish to be saved. There are few that do not—but unfortunately men generally want to be saved in their own way, and not according to the Bible; they love the crown, although they will seldom take up the cross. Friend, you need not be in any uncertainty about it; you may soon know what your state is; it is all to be found in this little Book; the marks, the signs, the tokens, the evidences are so clearly recorded, that he who runs may read. And what are they? Listen, I beseech you.

It is written here, "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." "There is not a just man upon earth that does good and sins not." Do you know this? Have you been brought to the wholesome conclusion that you are no better than a lost sinner by nature, wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, without one spark of natural goodness, deserving of nothing but God's wrath and condemnation? Oh! if you have not, tremble for yourself and repent! Be very sure you are losing your own soul.

Again, it is written: "Except a man be **born again**, he cannot see the kingdom of God." "You must be born again." Have you gone through that mighty change? Do you feel an abhorrence of former carelessness and indifference, a desire to serve God from the heart, a putting away of old things and a putting on of new? Has godly sorrow wrought in you repentance unto salvation? Oh, if it has not, tremble for yourself! Know for a certainty you are losing your own soul!

Again it is written, "He who **believes** not shall be damned." "Without faith it is impossible to please Him." Have you any of this faith? Have you been convinced of the utter insufficiency of your own righteousness, of the wretched poverty of your own best works? Have you come in humility and lowly-mindedness, renouncing all confidence in yourself—to the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, trusting simply in His blood and righteousness, resting solely on His merits and intercession? Oh! if you have not, tremble for yourself and repent. Be not deceived! You are losing your own soul!

Lastly, it is written: "Be **holy**, for I am holy." "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." What do you know of this holiness? Can you say that God the Holy Spirit has actually begun the blessed and never-dying work of sanctification within you? Do you feel any pure love towards God and your neighbors? Is it your supreme desire to advance God's glory? Have you any zeal for the extension of His kingdom? Do you strive not to be conformed to this world? Do you profess to regulate every thought and word and action by the Holy Scriptures? Do you hunger and thirst after a complete mortification of sin, and look forward with longing to the time when Satan shall be bound, and there shall be no more struggle between the flesh and the spirit? Are you meek and gentle towards all men? Do you redeem the time daily, looking on every minute as a talent for which you are accountable, and aiming to be employed as far

as possible, in the things which are just and honorable and lovely and of good report? Are the ordinances of Christ's Church sweet and precious to your soul? Are prayer and praise a delight—in public, in your family, in private? Is your Bible your daily food, a light to your feet and a lantern to your path? Are you above the fear of men, and can you think lightly of their praise in comparison with that which is of God? Do you count all things but loss, if you can but win Christ? Do you count the life that now is, as nothing compared with that which is to come? Oh! if you know not something, however little, of these things, tremble for yourself and repent! Rest assured you are losing your own soul!

O beloved, be merciful to yourselves. Cease to think so much about this vile body, this perishable world! Think more about those precious souls which Jesus purchased with His own blood—about that eternal resting-place where your Savior sits at the right hand of God. "Labor not for the food which perishes—but for that food which endures unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give you."

True Christian, a word for you. You know these things; you can say, "By the grace of God I have been brought to see the emptiness of this world, and the value of my soul; by the grace of God I am what I am." Oh, remember then, to make full proof that you are one of Christ's flock, by your daily conduct, your habits, your temper.

Let your life throughout the coming year be a silent witness to the Gospel. Strive to assist Christ's ministers, in your families and among your friends and acquaintances, by speaking to them of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God, by showing them what great things your heavenly Father has done for you. Let all take knowledge that to have been with Jesus has made you happier, holier, better in every relation of life! And so perhaps it may please God to give some repentance to the acknowledging of the truth—and thus their souls may be delivered from the snare of the devil, and saved in the great day when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed!

What Can You Know?

J. C. Ryle

"Can you fathom the mysteries of God? Can you probe the limits of the Almighty? They are higher than the heavens—what can you do? They are deeper than the depths of the grave—what can you know?" Job 11:7-8

These striking words came from the lips of Zophar the Naamathite, one of the three friends who came to comfort the patriarch Job in his affliction. Those worthy men, no doubt, meant well; and their sympathy is deserving of all praise, in a cold and unfeeling world. But they completely misunderstood the case before them, and so proved "physicians of no value." They only irritated the poor sufferer, and added to his troubles. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that they said many wise and excellent things, and of these the passage which heads this paper is one.

The verses before us contain four weighty questions. Two of them we certainly cannot answer, but two we can. A little brief discussion of the whole subject to which the text points appears suitable to the times in which we live.

Our lot is cast in a day when a *wave of unbelief* is passing over the world, like a wave of fever, cholera, diphtheria, or plague. It is vain to deny it. Every intelligent observer of the times, knows that it is so. I do not say for a moment that the advance of *science* necessarily makes men unbelievers. Nothing is further from my thoughts. I am thankful for every addition to our knowledge. I doubt whether formal, organized, systematic, reasoning *infidelity* is so common as many suppose. But I do say that there is in the air of these times, a disposition to question everything in revealed religion, and to suspect that *science* and *Scripture* cannot be reconciled. The faith of many church-goers and professing Christians seems cold, and languid, and torpid. They are continually harping on *petty modern objections* to Scripture. "Are such and such things in the Bible really quite true? Do not some clever and learned people say we should not believe them?" This is the kind of mischievous talk, which is often heard in many quarters. To supply some simple antidotes to this skeptical spirit, to show the unreasonableness of it, to nerve and invigorate the Christian, to make him see the strength of his position, to help him to get rid of a doubting spirit, and to enable him to grasp his old creed more tightly than ever—these are the objects I have in view in this paper.

I. First, and foremost, a wise Christian ought always to admit that there are many things in Bible religion, which of necessity we cannot fully understand. The Book of Scripture, the Book of God, contains much which, like God Himself, we cannot "find out to perfection."

The catalogue of these hard things is not a small one, and I shall only supply a few leading instances. I will mention the Mosaic account of *creation*—the fall and entrance of *sin* into the world—the doctrine of the Trinity—the *incarnation* of Christ—the *atonement* for sin made by Christ's death—the personality and work of the *Holy Spirit*—the *inspiration* of Scripture—the reality of *miracles*—the use and efficacy of *prayer*—the precise nature of the *future state*—the *resurrection* of the body after death—each and all of these subjects, I say, contains much that we cannot fully explain, because it is above the reach of our faculties. No Christian of common sense, I believe, would pretend to deny it. The humblest child could ask questions about each of them, which the wisest theologian in Christendom could never answer!

But what of it? Does it follow that we care to believe nothing about a subject, and to reject it altogether, because we do not understand everything about it? Is this fair and reasonable? Is this the way that we deal with our children, when we require them to begin the study of mathematics, or any other branch of education? Do we allow our boys to say, "I will learn nothing—until I understand everything?" Do we not require them to take many things on trust, and to begin by simply believing? "I speak as to wise men—you judge what I say."

The plain truth is, that to refuse to believe Christian doctrines because they are *above our reason*, and we cannot fully understand them—is only one among many proofs of man's natural pride and arrogance. We are all, at our best—but poor, weak, defective

creatures. Our power of grasping any subject, and seeing all round it, is extremely small. Our education rarely goes on for more than twenty years, and is often very shallow and superficial. After twenty-five, most of us add little to our knowledge. We plunge into some profession, have little time for thought or reading, and are absorbed and distracted by the business and cares of life. By the time we are seventy, our memories and intellects begin to fail, and in a few years we are carried to our graves and see corruption.

And is it likely, or probable, or reasonable to suppose—that such a creature as this can ever understand perfectly the Eternal and Almighty God, or the communications which God has made to man? Is it not rather certain that there will be many things about God and Scripture that he cannot, from his very nature, comprehend. I will not insult my readers by asking for a reply. I assert, without hesitation, that no Christian ever need be ashamed of admitting that there are many things in Scripture, which he does not fully understand, and does not pretend to explain. Yet he believes them fully—and lives in this belief.

After all, when a Christian meets one of those few men of science who profess to believe nothing in religion which he cannot fully understand, he would do well to ask him a simple question. Has he ever investigated the facts and doctrines of the Bible, which he says are incredible, with the same careful pains which he exercises when he uses his microscope, his telescope, his spectroscope, his dissecting knife, or his chemical apparatus? I doubt it extremely. I venture to believe that if some scientific infidels would examine the Book of *God* with the same reverent analysis with which they daily examine the Book of *Nature*, they would find that the things "hard to be understood" are not so many and inscrutable as they now suppose, and that the things plain and easy, are a wide field which richly repays cultivation. That we "cannot find out the Almighty to perfection" let us always admit. But let us never admit that we can find out nothing, and are justified in neglecting Him.

II. The second point which I wish to bring forward is this. **A wise Christian ought always to remember that there are countless things in the material world around us, which we do not fully understand.** There are mysterious things in the *Book of Nature*—as well as in the *Bible*. Nature's pages contain hard knots and mysteries—as well as the pages of the Book of God. In short, *science* contains its hard things as well as *Scripture*.

I am quite sure that the wisest and most learned men of science would be the most ready to admit the truth of what I have just said. If anything has specially characterized them in every age, it has been their deep humility. The more they have known—the more they have confessed the limited extent of their knowledge. The memorable language which Sir Isaac Newton is said to have used towards the end of his life ought never to be forgotten: "I have been nothing more than a little child who has picked up a few shells and pebbles on the *shore* of the *ocean of truth*."

How little, to begin with, do we know about the *heavens* over our heads, or the *earth* under our feet! The sun, the moon, the planets, the fixed stars, the comets—can all supply deep questions which the wisest astronomers cannot answer. Yet, for all this, who but a fool would despise the work of Newton, and Halley, and Herschel, and Arago, and Airey? The *age* of the globe on which we live, the date and cause of the various convulsions it has gone through, long before man was created, the duration of the periods between each change of climate and temperature; what wise geologists will dare to speak positively of such subjects as these? They may *speculate*, and *guess*, and propound *theories*. But how often their conclusions have been overthrown! Yet who would dare to say that Buckland, and Sedgwick, and Phillips, and Lyell, and Murchison, and Owen had written nothing worth notice?

How little can we account for the action of some deadly poisons, and especially in the case of snake bites, and hydrophobia! The virus of a mad dog's bite, will often remain dormant in the system for months, and then become active—and defy all medical treatment. But no one can explain what that virus is. The deaths caused by snake-bites in India are reported to be about 20,000 a year. Yet to this day, the precise nature of the cobra's venom has baffled all chemical analysis, and once received into the human body, the most skillful doctors find they cannot prevent that venom causing death. But what man in his senses would conclude that chemistry and medicine are unworthy of respect, and that Liebig, and Fresenius, or Hervey, and Hunter, and Jenner, and Watson, have conferred no benefit on the world?

How little can men of science account for all the phenomena of light, heat, electricity, magnetism, and chemical action! How many problems lie under the words, "matter, force, energy," which no one has solved! Far be it from me, to disparage the extra ordinary advances which physical science has made in this generation. But I am quite certain that its leading students, from Faraday downwards, will confess that *there are many things which they cannot explain*.

How little do we know about earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, hurricanes, and epidemics! They come suddenly, like the recent awful catastrophes at Ischia and Java, or the historic events at Pompeii and Lisbon. They cause immense destruction of life and property. But *why* they come, *when* they do come, and *what laws* regulate them, so that the inhabitants of a country may be prepared for them, even in this enlightened nineteenth century, we are totally and entirely ignorant! We can only lay our hands on our mouths—and be still.

How little, to bring matters to a familiar point—how less than little, or nothing in reality, can we explain the connection between our minds and bodies. Who can tell me why a sense of shame makes the little child's face turn red, or a sense of fear makes the same face turn pale? Who can tell me how my will affects my members, and what it is that makes me walk, or move, or lift my hand whenever I wish? Nobody ever did explain it—and nobody ever will! It is one of the many things which baffle all inquiry.

Now what shall we say to the facts I have adduced? That they are facts I am sure no man of common-sense will deny. If I were to say to a man of science, "I do not believe any of your conclusions, because there are many hard things in the *Book of Nature* which you cannot explain," —I would be acting very foolishly. I shall do nothing of the kind. I have not the slightest sympathy with those weak-kneed Christians, who seem to think that science and Scripture can never harmonize, and that they must always scowl and look askance at one another, like two quarrelsome dogs.

On the contrary, I shall always hail the annual discoveries of physical science with a hearty welcome. For the continual progress of its students by experiment and observation, and for their annual accumulation of facts—I am deeply thankful. I am not the least afraid that science will ever finally contradict Christian theology (though it may appear to do so for a season), if students of science will only be logical. I only fear that, in their zeal, they are sometimes apt to forget that it is most illogical to draw a *general* conclusion from a *particular* premise—to build *houses of theories* without foundations. I am firmly convinced that the *words* of God's mouth, and the

works of God's hands—will never be found really to contradict one another. When they appear to do so, I am content to wait. *Time will untie the knot!*

I do not forget that some young philosophers are fond of talking of the "Laws of Nature," and of saying that they cannot reconcile them with the Bible. They tell us that these "laws" are unchangeable, and that the *miracles* and supernatural parts of Scripture, which seem to contradict the laws of nature, are therefore unbelievable. But these philosophers would do well to remember, that it is not at all certain that we know all the Laws of Nature, and that higher, and deeper Laws may not yet be discovered. At any rate they must own that some of the existing "Laws" were not known and received three or four centuries ago. But surely, if that is the case, we may fairly assume that many other "Laws" may yet be found out, and that many problems which we cannot solve now—will be solved hereafter.

Two things, however, I must say, before leaving this part of my paper.

(a) On the one side, I appeal to those few men of science who turn away from Christianity, and refuse to believe, because of the hard things which its creed requires them to believe. I ask them whether this is just and fair. We do not turn away from physical science, because it contains many things which they themselves admit they cannot explain. On the contrary, we bid them godspeed, and wish success to their researches and investigations. But in return, we ask them to deal honestly with Christianity. We admit that it contains difficulties, like physical science; but we cannot allow that this is any reason why it should be rejected altogether.

(b) On the other side, I appeal to those timid Christians whose faith is shaken by the attacks which *men of science* sometimes make on their creed, and are ready to throw down their arms and run away. I ask them whether this is not weak, and cowardly, and foolish? I bid them to remember that the difficulties of the skeptical man of science, are just as great as those of the Christian. I entreat them to stand firm and not be afraid. Let us frankly admit that there are "hard to be understood" and deep things in our creed. But let us steadily maintain that this is no proof that it is not true and not worthy of all acceptance.

III. The third and last point to which I shall ask the attention of my readers is this. **While it is true that we cannot find out the Almighty to perfection, it is not true to say that we can find out nothing at all in Scriptural religion.** On the contrary, we know many things which are enough to make unbelief and agnosticism inexcusable.

What, then, do we know? Let me mention a few facts which no intelligent person can pretend to deny.

(a) We find ourselves living in a world full of sorrow, pain, strife, and wickedness, which no advance of science, learning, or civilization, is able to prevent. We see around us, daily proof that we are all, one after another, going out of this world to the grave. Humbling as the thought is, we are all dying daily, and these bodies, which we take such pains to feed, and clothe, and comfort—must see corruption! It is the same all over the globe. Death comes to all men and women alike, of every name, and nation, and people, and tongue. Neither rank, nor riches, nor intellect, can grant exemption. Dust we are—and to dust we return. At any rate, we know this.

(b) We find, moreover, that all over the world the vast majority of mankind have a settled, rooted, inward feeling, that this life is not all, that there is a future state, and an existence beyond the grave. The absence of this feeling is the exception. There it is. Assyria, Egypt, Greece, Rome, Hindustan, China, Mexico, and the darkest heathen tribes, as a general rule, are agreed on this point—however strange and diverse their ideas of God, and religion, and the soul. Will anyone tell me—that we do not know this?

(c) We find, moreover, that the only thing which has ever enabled men and women to look forward to the future without fear, and has given them peace in life, and hope in death, is that religion which Jesus Christ brought into the world nearly nineteen hundred years ago, and of which Christ Himself is the sun, and center, and root, and foundation. Christ, I say emphatically—Christ and His Divinity— Christ and His atoning death— Christ and His resurrection— Christ and His life in heaven. Yes! that very religion of Christ, which some tell us they cannot receive because of the mysteries and difficulties of its creed, has made the deepest moral mark on mankind that has been made since man was created. Nothing called religion, whether Classic heathenism, or Buddhism, or Confucianism, or Mohammadanism, has ever produced effects on consciences and conduct, which can bear comparison for a moment with the effects produced by Christianity! The changes which have taken place in the state of the world before Christ—and the world after Christ—and the difference at this day between those parts of the globe where the Bible is read, and those where it is not known, are great apparent facts which have never been explained away. The holiest lives and the happiest deaths which have been seen on the earth for eighteen centuries have been the result of the supernatural theology of the Bible, of faith in and of obedience to Christ, and the story of the cross! I challenge any one to deny this.

(d) We find, above all, that the Historic Founder of Christianity, Jesus Christ Himself, is a great fact which has been before the world for eighteen centuries, and has completely baffled all the efforts of infidels and non-Christians to explain it away. No skeptical writer has ever given a satisfactory answer to the question "Who was Christ? Where did He come from?" The super-human purity of His life, confessed even by men like Rousseau and Napoleon, the super-human wisdom of His teaching—the super-human mystery of His death—the inexplicable incident of His resurrection—the undeniable influence which His apostles obtained for His doctrines, without the aid of money or arms! All these are simple matters of history, and demand the attention of every honest man who really wishes to inquire into the great subject of religion. They are indisputable facts in the annals of the world. Let those who dare deny them.

Now what shall we say to these facts? That they are facts which I think no one of average intelligence can possibly deny. I assert that they form a mass of evidence in favor of Christianity which cannot be safely neglected by any honest mind. "What can you know?" says Zophar. I answer, we know enough to justify every Christian in resting his soul calmly and confidently on the revelation which God has given us of Himself, and of Christ—in His Bible. That Scripture is supported by such an enormous mass of probable evidence, that we may safely trust its truth.

I answer, furthermore, that we "know" enough to warrant us in urging every sceptic to consider seriously, as a prudent man, whether he is not occupying a very dangerous and untenable position. Probabilities are all against him; and probabilities, in the vast majority

of things, are the only guide of choice and action. He cannot say that the witness of eighteen centuries is so weak and worthless, that it deserves no attention. On the contrary, it is so strong that, if he cannot explain it away, he ought either to throw down the arms of his *unbelief*, or to avow that he is not open to *reason*. In a word, he is not willing to be convinced. He has shut his eyes, and is determined not to open them. Well might our Lord say, "If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets—they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead!" Well might He "marvel at unbelief" (Luke 16:31. Mark 6. 6).

I shall now **CONCLUDE** this paper, with two general remarks which I commend to the attention of all who read it.

1. For one thing, let me try to show the true causes of a vast amount of the unbelief of the present day.

That there is a good deal of unbelief in this age—it is vain to deny. The number of people who attend no place of worship, and seem to have no religion—is very considerable. A vague kind of scepticism or agnosticism is one of the commonest spiritual diseases in this generation. It meets us at every turn, and crops up in every company. Like the Egyptian plague of frogs, it makes its way into every family and home, and there seems no keeping it out. Among high and low, and rich and poor, in town and country, in universities and manufacturing towns, in castles and in cottages, you will continually find some form of unbelief. It is no longer a pestilence that walks in darkness, but a destruction which wastes at noon day. It is even considered *clever* and *intellectual*, and a mark of a *thoughtful* mind. Society seems *leavened* with it. He who avows his belief of everything contained in the Bible, must make up his mind in many companies—to be smiled at contemptuously, and thought an ignorant and weak man!

(a) Now there is no doubt that, as I have already said, the seat of unbelief in some people, is the HEAD. They refuse to accept anything which they cannot understand, or which seems above their reason. Inspiration, Miracles, the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Atonement, the Holy Spirit, the Resurrection, the Future State—all these mighty verities are viewed with cold indifference as disputable points, if not absolutely rejected. "Can we entirely explain them? Can we satisfy their reasoning faculties concerning them?" If not they must be excused if they stand in doubt. What they cannot fully understand, they tell us they cannot fully believe, and so they never exhibit any religion while they live, though, strangely enough, they like to be buried with religious forms when they die.

(b) But while I admit this, I am equally certain that with some, the real seat of unbelief is the HEART. They love the sins and habits of life, which the Bible condemns, and are determined not to give them up. They take refuge from an uneasy conscience—by trying to persuade themselves that the old Book is not true! The measure of their creed is their lusts! Whatever condemns their natural inclinations, they refuse to believe. The famous Lord Rochester, once a profligate and an infidel, but at last a true penitent, is recorded to have said to Bishop Burnet, as he drew near his end, "It is not reason, but a wicked life, which is the great argument against the Bible." A true and weighty saying! Many, I am persuaded, profess that they do not believe, because they know, if they did believe—they must give up their favorite sins!

(c) Last, but not least, with far the greater number of people the seat of unbelief is a lazy, indolent will. They dislike all kind of trouble. Why should they deny themselves, and take pains about Bible-reading and praying, and diligent watchfulness over thoughts, and words, and actions—when, after all, it is not quite certain that the Bible is true? This, I have little doubt, is the form of unbelief which prevails most frequently among young people. They are not agitated by intellectual difficulties. They are often not the slaves of any special lusts or passions, and live tolerably decent lives. But deep down in their hearts there is a disinclination to make up their minds, and to be decided about anything in religion. And so they *drift down the stream of life* like dead fish, and float helplessly on, and are tossed to and fro, hardly knowing what they believe. And while they would shrink from telling you they are not Christians, they are without any backbone in their Christianity.

Now, whether head, or heart, or will, be in fault—it is some comfort to remember that there is probably less of real, downright, *reasoning unbelief* than there appears to be. Thousands, we may be sure, do not in their heart of hearts, believe all that they say with their lips. Many a skeptical saying is nothing more than a borrowed article, picked up and retailed by him who says it, because it sounds clever—while, in reality, it is not the language of his inner man.

Sorrow, and sickness, and affliction, often bring out the strange fact that so-called sceptics are not sceptics at all, and that many talk scepticism merely from a desire to seem clever, and to win the fleeting applause of clever men. That there is an immense amount of unbelief in the present day I make no question; but that much of it is mere show and pretense is, to my mind—as clear as noonday. No man, I think, can do pastoral work, and come to close quarters with souls, visit the sick, and attend the dying, without coming to that conclusion.

The parting advice I offer to *heart* sceptics is simply this. Let me entreat you to deal honestly with your soul about *secret sins*. Are you sure there is not some bad habit, or lust, or passion, which, almost insensibly to yourself—you would like to indulge, if it were not for some remaining scruples? Are you quite sure that your doubts do not arise from a desire to get rid of restraint? You would like, if you could, to do something which the Bible forbids, and you are looking about for reasons for disregarding the Bible. Oh! if this is the case with any of my readers, awake to a sense of your danger! Break the chains which are gradually closing round you! Pluck out the right eye, if need be; but never be the servant of sin! I repeat that *the secret love of some wicked indulgence, is the real beginning of a vast amount of infidelity*.

The parting advice I offer to *lazy* sceptics is this. Let me entreat you to deal honestly with your souls about the use of means for acquiring religious knowledge. Can you lay your hand on your heart and say that you really take pains to find out what is truth? Do not be ashamed to pray for light. Do not be ashamed of regularly studying your Bible. Thousands, I am persuaded, in this day, know nothing of the Holy Book which they affect to despise, and are utterly ignorant of the real nature of that Christianity which they pretend they cannot believe. Let not that be the case with you. That famous "honest doubt," which many say is better than "half the creeds," is a pretty thing to talk about. But I venture a strong suspicion that much of the scepticism of the present day, if sifted and analyzed, would be found to spring from utter ignorance of the primary truths of Christianity

2. The other concluding remark which I will make is this. **I will try to explain the reason why so many professing Christians are continually frightened and shaken in their minds by doubts about the truth of Christianity.**

That this is the case of many I have a very strong impression. I suspect there are thousands of church-going Christians, who would repudiate with indignation, the charge of scepticism, and yet are constantly troubled about the truth of Christianity. Some new book, or lecture, or sermon, appears from the pen of men like Darwin or Colenso, and at once these worthy people are scared and panic-stricken, and run from clergyman to clergyman to pour out their anxieties and fears, as if the very ark of God was in danger. "Can these new ideas be really true?" they cry. "Must we really give up the Old Testament, and the flood, and the miracles, and the resurrection of Christ? Alas! alas! what shall we do?" In short, like Ahaz, their "hearts are moved, as the trees of the forest are moved with the wind" (Isaiah 7:2).

Now what is the cause of this readiness to give way to doubts? Why are so many alarmed about the faith of eighteen centuries, and frightened out of their wits by attacks which no more shake the evidences of Christianity, than the scratch of a pin shakes the great Pyramid of Egypt.

The reason is soon told. The answer lies in a nutshell. The greater part of modern Christians are utterly ignorant of the truths and evidences of Christianity, and the enormous difficulties of infidelity. The education of the vast majority of people on these subjects is wretchedly meager and superficial, or it is no education at all. Not one in a hundred church-goers, probably, has ever read a page of the books on the evidences of the Christian faith. What wonder if the minds of such people are like a city without walls—and utterly unable to resist the attacks of the most commonplace infidelity, much less of the refined and polished scepticism of these latter days.

The remedy for this state of things is patent and plain. Every professing Christian should arm his mind with some elementary knowledge of the evidences of Scriptural religion and the difficulties of infidelity, and so be ready to give a reason for the faith that he professes. He ought not merely to read and love his Bible, but to be able to tell any one why he believes the Bible to be true. Ministers should preach occasionally on the evidences of Scripture. It was one of that great man Cecil's counsels to a clergyman, "In your sermons never forget the infidel." Schools, Colleges, and Universities, which make any pretense to be Christian, should never altogether leave out evidences in their scheme of instruction for the young. In short, if we want the coming generation to hold fast Christianity, we must provide them with defensive armor!

With these two remarks I close my paper. Thank God! we travel on to a world where there is no ignorance, no scepticism, and no doubt. We shall soon *see* as we have been seen, and *know* as we have been known. Alas! What a waking up remains for many—the moment the last breath is drawn! There is no unbelief in eternity. Voltaire now knows whether there is a sin-hating God; and David Hume now knows whether there is an endless hell. The infant of days, by merely dying, acquires a knowledge which the subtlest philosophers, while on earth, profess their inability to attain. The dead Hottentot knows more than the living Socrates. To that future world the true Christian may look forward calmly, confidently, and without fear. He who has *Christ* in his heart, and the *Bible* in his head, is standing on a rock, and has no cause to be afraid. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, let us be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that our labor is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:58). If we cannot "find out the Almighty to perfection," we can know enough to give us peace in life, and hope in death. What we "know" let us hold fast.

One thing at least is certain. Though we KNOW little—we can DO much. Is it not written, "If any man will *do* His will, he shall *know* of the doctrine, whether it be of God." "The hidden things belong to the Lord our God, but the revealed things belong to us and our children forever, so that we may *follow* all the words of this law." (John 7:17; Deut. 29:29)

HEAVEN

by J. C. Ryle

"Nothing unclean, or anyone who does anything detestable, and no one who tells lies will ever enter it. Only those whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life will enter it." Revelation 21:27

Brethren, there can be no question about the place described in our text. It is heaven itself, that holy city, the new Jerusalem, which is yet to be revealed.

I would gladly begin this, my last Sunday among you, by speaking of heaven. Before I depart and leave you in the wilderness of this world, I would dwell a little on that Canaan God has promised to those who love Him. *There* it is, that the last and best wish of my heart, you may all go. *There* it is, which is my consolation to think, where I shall meet some of you again.

Brethren, you all hope to go to heaven yourselves. There is not one of you but wishes to be in eternal happiness after death. But on what are your hopes founded? Heaven is a prepared place. Those who shall dwell there are all of one character. The entrance into it is only by one door. Brethren, remember that. And then, too, I read of two sorts of hope: a good hope and a bad hope; a true hope and a false hope; a living hope and a dead hope; the hope of the righteous and the hope of the wicked; the hope of the believer and of the hypocrite. I read of some who have hope through grace, a hope that does not make ashamed; and of others who have no true hope, and are without God in the world. Brethren, remember that. Surely it were wise and prudent and safe to find out what the Bible tells you on the subject, to discover whether your confidence is indeed well founded; and to this end I call your attention to the doctrine of my text. There you will find three things:

I. The place of heaven.

II. The character of those who will certainly not be in heaven.

III. The character of those who will certainly be in heaven.

May the Lord grant you to well consider your own fitness for heaven. There must be a certain fitness for that blessed place in our minds and characters. It is senseless, vain, and absurd to suppose that all shall go there--whatever their lives have been. May God the Holy Spirit incline you to examine yourselves faithfully while you have time, before that great day comes when the unconverted shall be past all hope, and the saints past all fear!

I. The place of heaven. There is such a place as heaven. No truth is more certain in the whole of Scripture than this--there remains a rest for the people of God. This earth is not our rest--it cannot be--there breathes not a man or woman who ever found it so. Go, build your happiness on earth, if you are so disposed; choose everything you can imagine would make life enjoyable—take money, house, and lands; take learning, health, and beauty; take honor, rank, respect, troops of friends; take everything your mind can picture to itself or your eye desire. Take it all, and yet I dare to tell you, that even then you would not find rest. I know well that a few short years, and your heart's confession would be--"It is all hollow, empty, and unsatisfying! It is all weariness and disappointment! It is all vanity and vexation of spirit!" I well know that you would feel within a hungering and famine, a leanness and barrenness of soul; and ready indeed would you be to bear your testimony to the mighty truth, "This earth is not our rest!"

O brethren, how faithful is that saying, "If in this life only we have hope, we are indeed most miserable." This life, so full of trouble and sorrow and care, of anxiety and labor and toil; this life of losses and bereavements, of partings and separations, of mourning and woe, of sickness and pain; this life of which even Elijah got so tired that he requested he might die; truly I would be crushed to the very earth with misery, if I felt that this life were all that is. If I thought there was nothing for me beyond the dark, cold, silent, lonely grave--I would indeed say--Better never have been born!

Thanks be to God--this life is not all. I know and am persuaded there is a glorious rest beyond the tomb! This earth is only the training-school for eternity; these graves are but the stepping-stone and half-way house to heaven. I feel assured this my poor body shall rise again; this corruptible shall yet put on incorruption, and this mortal immortality, and be with Christ forever. Yes, heaven is true--and not a fable I do not doubt it. I am not more certain of my own existence than I am of this--there does remain a rest for the people of God.

And, brethren, **what sort of a place shall heaven be?** Before we pass on and consider its inhabitants, let us just pause an instant and think on this. What sort of a place shall heaven be?

Heaven shall be **a place of perfect rest and peace**. Those who dwell there have no more conflict with the world, the flesh, and the devil. Their warfare is finished, and their fight is fought--at length they lay aside the armor of God, at last they may say to their spiritual weapons--Rest and be still. They watch no longer, for they have no spiritual enemies to fear. They fast and mortify the flesh no longer, for they have no vile earthy body to keep under subjection. They pray no more, for they have no evil to pray against. *There* the wicked must cease from troubling*! There* sin and temptation are forever shut out! The gates are better barred than those of Eden--and the devil shall enter in no more.

O Christian brethren, rouse you and take comfort; surely this shall be indeed a blessed rest. *There* shall be no need of means of grace, for we shall have the end to which they are meant to lead. *There* shall be no need of ordinances, we shall have the substance they are appointed to keep in mind. *There* **faith** shall be swallowed up in sight, and **hope** in certainty, and **prayer** in praise, and **sorrow** in joy! Now in this present world--is the school-time, the season of the 'lesson and the rod'--then will be the eternal holiday. Now we must endure hardness and press on faint yet pursuing--then we shall sit down at ease, for the Canaanite shall be expelled forever from the land.

Now we are tossed upon a stormy sea--then we shall be safe in harbor! Now we have to plough and sow--there we shall reap the harvest! Now we have the labor—but then the wages! Now we have the battle—but then the victory and reward! Now we must bear the cross—but then we shall receive the crown! Now we are journeying through the wilderness—but then we shall be at home! O Christian brethren, well may the Bible tell you, "**Blessed** are those who die in the Lord, for they rest from their labor." Surely you must feel that witness is true.

But again. Heaven shall be **a place of perfect and unbroken happiness**. Mark what your Bible tells you in the very chapter which contains my text, "God shall wipe away all tears from the eyes of His people; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain--for the former things are passed away." Hear what the prophet Isaiah says in the twenty-fifth chapter: "The Lord God has swallowed up death forever! The Lord will wipe away tears from off all faces. It shall be said in that day--Behold, this is our God! We have waited for him, and he will save us! This is Yahweh! We have waited for him. We will be glad and rejoice in his salvation!"

Brethren, think of an eternal habitation in which there is no sorrow. Who is there here below that is not acquainted with sorrow? It came in with thorns and thistles at Adam's fall, it is the bitter cup that all must drink, it is before us and behind us, it is on the right hand and the left, it is mingled with the very air we breathe. Our bodies are racked with pain, and we have sorrow. Our worldly goods are taken from us, and we have sorrow. We are encompassed with difficulties and troubles, and we have sorrow. Our friends forsake us and look coldly on us, and we have sorrow. We are separated from those we love, and we have sorrow. Those on whom our hearts' affections are set go down to the grave and leave us alone, and we have sorrow. And then, too, we find our own hearts frail and full of corruption, and that brings sorrow. We are persecuted and opposed for the Gospel's sake, and that brings sorrow. We see those who are near and dear to us refusing to walk with God, and that brings sorrow. Oh, what a sorrowing, grieving world we live in!

Blessed be God! there shall be no sorrow in heaven. There shall not be one single tear shed within the courts above. There shall be no more disease and weakness and decay. The coffin, and the funeral, and the grave shall be things unknown. Our faces shall no more be pale and sad. No more shall we go out from the company of those we love and be parted asunder--that word, 'farewell', shall never be heard again. There shall be no anxious thought about tomorrow to mar and spoil our enjoyment. There shall be no sharp and cutting words to wound our souls. Our needs will have come to a perpetual end, and all around us shall be harmony and love.

O Christian brethren, what is our light affliction when compared to such an eternity as this? Shame on us if we murmur and complain and turn back--with such a heaven before our eyes! What can this vain and passing world give us better than this? this is the city of our God Himself, when He will dwell among us Himself. The glory of God shall enlighten it, and the Lamb is the light

thereof. Truly we may say, as Mephibosheth did to David, "Let the world take all, forasmuch as our Lord will come in peace." Such is the Bible heaven, there is none other; these sayings are faithful and true, not any of them shall fail. Surely, brethren it is worth a little pain, a little laboring, a little toil, if only we may have the lowest place in the kingdom of God.

II. The character of those who will certainly not be in heaven. Let us now pass on and see that great thing which is revealed in the second part of our text.

You have heard of heaven—but all shall not enter it. Who are the people who shall not enter in? Brethren, this is a sad and painful inquiry, and yet it is one that must be made. I can do no more than declare to you Scripture truth: it is not my fault if it is cutting and gives offence. I must deliver my Master's message and diminish nothing; the line I have to draw is not mine—but God's: the blame, if you will lay it, falls on the Bible not on me. "There shall never enter into heaven anything that defiles, neither whatever works abomination—or tells lies." Verily these are solemn words; they ought to make you think.

"Nothing that defiles." This touches the case of all who are defiled with sins of heart, and yet feel it not, and refuse to be made clean. These may be decent people outwardly—but they are vile and polluted within. These are the worldly-minded. They live to this world only, and they have no thought of anything beyond it. The care of this world, the money, the politics of this world, the business of this world, the pleasures of this world, these things swallow up their whole attention. As for James' advice to keep ourselves unspotted from the world, they know not what it means.

These are the men who set their affections on earthly things; they have each their idol in the chamber of their imagination, and they worship and serve it more than God. These are the proud and self-righteous, the self-honoring and the self-conceited; they love the praise of men, they like the good opinion of this world. As for the glorious Lord who made them--His honor, His glory, His house, His word, His service—these are all things which in their judgment must go down, and take the second place. These know not what sorrow for sin means. They are strangers to spiritual concern; they are self-satisfied and content with their condition. If you attempt to stir them up to zeal and repentance, it is more than probable that they will be offended.

Brethren, you know well there are such people; they are not uncommon; they may be honorable in the eyes of men, they may be wise and knowing in this generation, admirable men of business, they may be first and foremost in their respective callings—but still there is but one account of them; they bring no glory to their Maker, they are lovers of themselves more than of God, and therefore they are counted as defiled in His sight and nothing that is defiled shall enter heaven.

But again: **"Nothing that works abomination."** This touches the case of all who practice those sins which God has pronounced abominable, and take pleasure in them, and countenance those who practice them. These are the men who work the works of the flesh, each as his heart inclines him. These are the adulterers, fornicators, and unclean livers; these are the drunkards, revellers, and gluttons; these are the blasphemers, swearers, and liars. These are the men who count it no shame to live in hatred, variance, wrath, strife, envyings, quarrellings and the like. They throw the reins on the neck of their lusts--they follow their passions wherever they may lead them. Their only object is to please themselves.

Brethren, you know well there are such people. The world may give smooth names to their conduct, the world may talk of them as light and mirthful, and loose and wild. Buthey are all abominable in the sight of God, and except they be converted and born again, they shall never enter heaven.

Once more: **"No one who tells lies."** This touches the case of hypocrites. These are the false professors; the lip-servants. They say that they know God—but in works they deny Him. They are like barren fig-trees, all leaves and no fruit. They are like tinkling cymbals, all sound—but hollow, empty and without substance. These have a name to live while they are dead, and a form of godliness without the power. They profess what they do not practice, they speak what they do not think, they say much and do little. Their words are most amazing, their actions are most poor. These men can talk most bravely of themselves; no better Christians than they are, if you will take them at their own evaluation. They can talk to you of grace, and yet they show none of it in their lives; they can talk to you of saving faith, and yet they possess not that charity which is faith's companion. They can declaim against forms most strongly, and yet their own Christianity is a form and no more; they can cry out loudly against Pharisees, and yet no greater Pharisees than they are themselves.

Oh, no; this religion is of a sort that is public, and not private; plenty abroad—but none at home; plenty outside—but none within; plenty in the tongue—but none in the heart. They are altogether unprofitable, good for nothing, they bear no fruit.

Brethren, you must know well there are such miserable people; alas! the world is full of them in these latter days. They may deceive ministers, they may deceive their neighbors, they may even deceive their friends and family, they may try hard to deceive themselves —but they are no better than liars in God's sight, and except they repent, they shall never enter heaven.

Brethren, consider well these things: "the sin-defiled, the abominable, the hypocrite, shall never enter into heaven." Look well to your own souls; judge yourselves that you be not judged of the Lord; I call heaven and earth to witness this day, those who will live these bad lives, whether they be Churchmen or dissenters, old or young, rich or poor, *they shall* in no wise enter heaven. Go, cleave to the ways of the world if you are so determined, stick to your sins if you must keep them—but I warn you solemnly this hour, that those who will have these things, shall never enter into heaven.

Go, blame me now for speaking sharply to you—think I am too particular if you like it—but, oh! remember if you ever stand outside the gates, crying in vain, "Lord, open to us!"--remember there was a time when I told you, the worldly-minded and the evil livers shall never enter in. Brethren, I have told you before, and I tell you now again for the last time, if you will cling to the things that God hates, you shall never enter into heaven.

III. The character of those who will certainly be in heaven. Brethren, we must pass on. The text has told you who shall not enter heaven. Oh! what a mighty crowd those words shut out! But it tells you something more: who are those who shall. Short is the account and simple: those only, who that are written in the Lamb's book of life. What is this book of life? There is a book, a little book, a book prepared from all eternity, which God the Father keeps sealed—the book of His election; of that book man knows nothing, excepting this blessed truth--that there is such a book. With that book man has little or nothing to do.

But there is another book, a little book, a book belonging specially to the Lord Jesus Christ, a book still unfinished, though year after year there are more names written in it; a book still open, still ready to receive the names of believing penitents: there are still some blank pages left for you; and this is the Lamb's book of life. And who are written in this precious book? I do not know their names—but I do know their characters, and what those characters are I will endeavor to tell you shortly, for the last time.

They are all **true penitents**. They have been convinced of their own unworthiness in God's sight; they have felt themselves to be sinners in deed and in truth; they have mourned over their sins, hated their sins, forsaken their sins; the remembrance of them is grievous, the burden of them intolerable; they have ceased to think well of their own condition and count themselves worthy to be saved; they have confessed with their whole heart: "Lord, we are really chief of sinners—Lord, we are indeed unclean."

Again: they are all **believers in Christ Jesus**. They have found out the excellency of the work He did to save them, and cast on Him the burden of their souls. They have taken Christ for their all in all: their wisdom, their righteousness, their justification, their forgiveness, their redemption. Other payment of their spiritual debts, they have none; other deliverances from the devil, they have not been able to find. But they have believed on Christ, and come to Christ for salvation; they are confident that what they cannot do, Christ can do for them; and having Jesus Christ to lean on, they feel perfect peace.

Once more: they are all **born of the Spirit and sanctified**. They have all put off the old man with his deeds, and put on the new man which is after God. They have all been renewed in the spirit of their minds; a new heart and a new nature has been given to them. They have brought forth those fruits which only are the proof of the Spirit being in them. They may have slipped and come short in many things; they may have mourned over their own deficiencies full often. But still, the general bent and bias of their lives has always been towards holiness—more holiness, more holiness, has always been their hearts' desire. They love God, and they must live to Him. Such is the character of those who are written in heaven. These, then, are the men whose names are to be found in the Lamb's book of life.

Once they may have been as bad as the very worst—defiled, abominable, liars--that does not matter. They have repented and believed, and now they are written in the book of life. They may have been despised and rejected of this world, poor and base and lowly in the judgment of their neighbors--that does not matter. They had repentance and faith and new hearts, and now they are written in the glorious book of life. They may have been of different ranks and nations; they may have lived at different ages, and never seen each other's faces--that does not matter. They have one thing at least in common, they have repented and believed, and been born again, and therefore they stand all together in the Lamb's book of life.

Yes, brethren, these are the men and women that enter heaven; nothing can keep them out. Tell me not of deathbed evidences, and visions and dreams of dying people; there is no evidence like that of Christ's followers. Repentance, faith, and holiness; this is a character against which the gates shall never be closed. Repent and believe in Christ and be converted, and then, whatever happens to others, you, at least, shall enter heaven; you shall never be cast out.

And now, men and brethren, in CONCLUSION, let me press upon you my old question. How is it with yourselves? What, no answer! Are you ready to depart? Again, no answer! Is your name written in the book of life? Once more, have you no answer?

Oh, think, think, unhappy man or woman, whoever you are, think what a miserable thing it is to be uncertain about eternity. And then consider, if you can not give your heart to God now, how is it possible you could enjoy God's heaven hereafter. Heaven is unceasing godliness; it is to be in the presence of God and His Christ for evermore. God is the light, the food, the air of heaven. It is an eternal sabbath. To serve God is heaven's employment; to talk with God is heaven's occupation.

O sinners, sinners, could you be happy there? to which of all the saints would you join yourselves, by whose side would you go and sit down, with whom of all the prophets and apostles would you love to converse? Surely it would be a wearisome thing to you; surely you would soon want to go forth and join your friends outside. Oh, turn, turn you while it is called today! God will not alter heaven merely to please you; better a thousand times to conform to His ways while you can. You must love the things of heaven before your death—or else you cannot enter heaven when you die.

Christian, look up and take comfort. Jesus has prepared a place for you, and those who follow Him shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of His hands. Look forward to that glorious abode He has provided; look forward in faith, for it is yours. O Christian brethren, think what a glorious meeting that shall be. There we shall see the saints of old, of whom we have so often read; there we shall see those holy ministers whose faith and patience we have admired; there we shall see one another round the throne of our common Savior, and be parted and separated no more. There we shall labor and toil no more, for the days of mourning shall be ended. Oh—but my heart will leap within me, if I see there faces I have known among you; if I hear the names of any of yourselves! The Lord grant it, the Lord bring it to pass. The Lord grant we may some of us, at least, come together in that day, when there shall be one fold and one Shepherd, and with one heart and voice join that glorious song, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain! Blessing and honor and glory and power be unto the Lamb forever and ever!"

Are You Looking?

by J. C. Ryle

"Looking unto Jesus!" Hebrews 12:2

The question which heads this page may seem an odd one at first sight. To whom or to what does it apply? The words of Paul, below it, supply the key to its meaning. It is an inquiry concerning your soul and the Lord Jesus Christ. It means neither more nor less than this- "Are you looking unto Jesus?"

"Looking unto Jesus" is a very simple expression: it is soon spoken and soon written; it contains no words hard to be understood. But it

is an expression rich in contents, and filled to the brim with food for thought. Here is a brief account of the Christian's character: he is one who "looks to Jesus." Here is the secret of running successfully the race that leads toward heaven: we must he ever "looking to Jesus." This is the way to begin well; this is the way to go on prosperously; this is the way to end in peace. Here is the photograph of patriarchs and prophets, of apostles and martyrs, of holy fathers and holy reformers, of holy saints, in every land and age: they were all men who "looked to Jesus." Here is the marrow of all creeds, and articles, and confessions of guilt: to "look to Jesus." Reader, if you and I wish to be saved, let us begin by asking ourselves the simple question, Am I looking to Jesus?

But how can you look to Jesus? He is not here. He has ascended up into heaven in the body, and is there sitting at the right hand of God. As God, no doubt, He is everywhere present, and fills heaven and earth: as Man, He can only be in one place at once- and that place is the place of honor at the Father's right hand. The notion that He is present in the bread and wine in the Lord's Supper is a weak invention of man, and one that has led to many superstitions: it is a notion flatly opposed to Scripture, and flatly contradicted in the Prayer-book of the Church of England. You may look at the bread and wine in the Lord's Supper, and as you look and eat and drink, your memory may be quickened, your soul refreshed, and your faith increased. But you cannot literally and corporally look at Jesus. His body and blood are in heaven, and not there. How then are you to look at Him?

Reader, there is but one answer to this question. You must look to Jesus *by faith*. True believing with the heart is the "looking" of which Paul makes mention to the Hebrew Christians. *Faith is the eye of the Christian's soul.* As Moses lifted up the brazen serpent in the wilderness, and the suffering Israelite who looked at it was immediately healed, so must you look at Jesus Christ with trust, confidence, reliance, and expectation. This is what Paul meant when he talked of "looking unto Jesus."

In what point of view ought you to look to Jesus, in order to get full benefit from Him? This is a very important inquiry, and one which I propose to answer in this tract. Vague, general, and indistinct notions in religion are dangerous things, and do great harm. Thousands are continually saying "they trust in Christ and no one else," and yet can hardly tell you what they mean: no wonder they feel little comfort in their Christianity. *Weak, indistinct perceptions of Christ will always produce weak consolations.* Reader, let me try to put you in a right position of soul: let me show you how to look to Jesus, so as to get the greatest amount of good from Him. It is an old saying, that there is a right way and a wrong way of doing everything; in nothing is that saying so true as in spiritual things, and specially in the relations between Christ and the soul.

There are three points of view in which your soul should look at Jesus Christ. Let me set them before you in order, and tell you what they are.

I. You should look *backward*, to Jesus on the cross.

II. You should look *upward*, to Jesus at the right hand of God.

III. You should look *forward*, to Jesus coming again at the last day.

Happy is he who takes these three looks every day that he lives! This is the man who will be found a peaceful, a strong, and a cheerful Christian. Let me now explain fully what I mean.

I. In the first place, you should look BACKWARD, to Jesus on the cross. Let your faith's eye daily look on Christ crucified, and rest in the sight.

What will you see, as you look at Jesus on the cross? You will see the eternal Son of God suffering, bleeding, agonizing, dying, in order to pay your soul's debt, and make satisfaction for your sins. You will see the most wonderful transaction taking place that ever took place since the foundation of the world. You will see a Divine Substitute suffering in your stead, the Just for the unjust; bearing your sins, carrying your transgressions, allowing Himself to be reckoned a curse and sin for you, in order that you, sinner as you are, might be set free from all guilt, and counted innocent before God.

What will you get from the sight? Clear views of the way of pardon and peace with God- clear knowledge of the true medicine for an aching conscience- clear perception of the only plan of forgiveness- justification, reconciliation, and acceptance with God. Nothing but Christ's atonement on the cross can ever clear up these things. Christ's substitution, Christ's satisfaction, Christ's atoning death, Christ's sacrifice for sin- this is the grand secret of peace with God. To know that when we were guilty, One bore our guilt- that when we were lost, One died that we might he saved- that when we were ruined, One died that we might be redeemed and set free- to know this is to know the foundation of all saving Christianity.

Reader, look steadily at Jesus on the cross, if you want to feel inward peace. Look to anything of your own, and you will never feel comfortable. Your own life and doings, your own repentance and amendment, your own morality and regularity, your own church-going and Sacrament-receiving, your own Bible-reading and your prayers, your own almsgiving and your charities- what, what are they all but *a huge mass of imperfection?* Rest not upon them for a moment, in the matter of your justification. As evidences of your wishes, feelings, bias, tastes, habits, inclinations, they may be useful helps occasionally. As grounds of acceptance with God they are worthless rubbish. They cannot give you comfort; they cannot bear the weight of your sins; they cannot stand the searching eye of God. Rest on nothing but Christ crucified, and the atonement He made for you on Calvary. This, this alone is the way of peace.

Look steadily to Jesus on the cross, and listen not to those who would persuade you to look elsewhere. Thousands of people in the present day are constantly looking to something else instead of Christ crucified, and secretly wondering that they do not find rest and comfort. They look to the Church, or the Sacraments, or the service- or the ministry, and insensibly use them as ends, instead of using them as means. They must change their plan, if they wish to find peace. It is the blood of Christ which alone can purge the conscience, and take the burden off the soul.

This is the point to which I see many come at last, after holding very different doctrine for many years. Nothing strikes me so much as the fact that we often hear of some divine, high in office, who has spent all his life in condemning what is called "Evangelical religion," clinging simply to Christ crucified in his last moments! The favorite doctrines of "High Churchmanship" seem to fail and break down in the valley of the shadow of death. Nothing seems to cheer and support but the "precious blood of Christ," and simple faith in the atonement. Reader, you will never have cause to be ashamed of the doctrine of the cross. Let the first look of your soul to

Jesus, be a look backward. Look at Him dying for your sins on the cross, and as you look, say to yourself, "This was done for me."

II. In the second place you ought to look UPWARD, to Jesus at the right hand of God. Let your faith's eye see Jesus as your Priest in heaven, and rejoice in the sight.

What will you see there? You will see the same Savior who died for you exalted to the place of highest honor, and doing the work of an intercessor and advocate for your soul. All was not done when He suffered for your sins on Calvary. He rose again and ascended up to heaven, to carry on there the work which He began on earth. There, as our Priest and Representative, He ever lives to make intercession for us. He presents our names before the Father; He continually pleads our cause. He obtains for us a never-ending supply of mercy and grace; He watches over our interests with an eye that never sleeps. He is ready, morning, noon, and night, to hear our confessions, to grant us absolution, to strengthen us for duty, to comfort us in trial, to guide us in perplexity, to hold us up in temptation, and to preserve us safe on our journey heavenward until we reach home.

What will you get by looking upward to Jesus? Comfort and strength in all the daily battle of life. What thought more cheering than the thought that Jesus is ever looking at you and watching over you! What idea more strengthening than the idea that you are never alone, never forgotten, never neglected, never without a Friend who is "able to save to the uttermost all them who come unto God by Him!" (Heb. vii. 25.)

This daily upward look at Jesus is a most important point. The life of Christ for His people in heaven is only second in importance to His death for them on the cross. The blood, the sacrifice, the atonement, the satisfaction for sin can never be too much prized or thought of. But the session in heaven, the priestly intercession, the daily advocacy of Jesus ought not to be forgotten. I sadly fear they are not so much considered in this day as they ought to be.

It is a striking and painful fact that many English people just now are hankering after that most dangerous invention of Popery, the Confessional. Clergymen who ought to know better are constantly urging on people the usefulness of private confession and private absolution. Men and women in all directions are greedily drinking in the doctrine, and flattering themselves that it is the way of peace. To kneel before God's ordained minister, to confess our sins to him, to receive at his hand complete absolution- all this is becoming most attractive to many consciences. Hundreds are persuading themselves that it is a valuable medicine for laboring and heavy laden souls.

To what may we trace the spread of this delusion? To nothing, I believe, so much as to ignorance of the priestly office of Jesus Christ. Men have lost sight of the fact that we have a Priest and confessional provided for us in the Gospel, and that we need none beside. They have been content with looking backward to the cross, and dwelling on Christ's death, and have forgotten the resurrection, and Christ's life as an Advocate at the right hand of God. They have confined their thoughts of Christ to the atonement He made for sin when He died. They have not remembered that He rose again, ascended up into heaven, and there acts as our Priest and Advocate when we come unto God by Him. In a word, they have looked backward to Christ's crucifixion, but they have not looked upward to Christ's priesthood and intercession.

Reader, beware of falling into this mistake. Beware of leaving out any part of the truth concerning Jesus. That great divine, John Owen, declared, two hundred years ago, that there was no office of Christ which Satan hated so much as the priestly one, and none which he labored so incessantly to obscure and bring into contempt. Understand that office thoroughly, and cling to it firmly. No earthly priest can be so wise, so sympathizing, so trustworthy, so able to help, as Jesus, the Son of God. From no confessional will you go away so light-hearted, so cheerful, so satisfied, as from the throne of grace, and from communion with Christ. Look up to Him daily, if you would be a happy Christian; pour out your heart before Him, if you would enjoy the consolations of the Gospel. This daily look to a living interceding Jesus is one great secret of strength and comfort in religion.

III. In the last place, you ought to look FORWARD to Jesus coming again. Let the eye of your faith look onward to the day when Christ shall come again the second time.

What will you see when that great event takes place? You will see the eternal Son of God return in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. He will come to raise the dead saints and to change the living ones, to punish the wicked and to reward the godly, to summon every one before His bar, and to give to every one according to His works. He will come to bind Satan, and deprive him of his usurped dominion, to deliver the earth from the curse, and to purify it as the eternal dwelling-place of a holy nation; to cast out sin, and all its accursed consequences- disease, death, sorrow, wars, poverty, injustice, and oppression. You see the world defiled now by the presence of evil. You will see it at length restored to its former state, and the days of paradise before the fall brought back again.

What will you get by looking forward to Jesus coming again? You will get that which is the best remedy against disquiet and depression- *hope* shed abroad in your heart about things to come. When the minds of others are cast down with perplexity, you will feel able to lift up your head and rejoice; when all around seems dark and gloomy, you will see light, and be able to wait patiently for better days.

Few things are so remarkable in the present time as the universal anxiety and suspense about the future. On all sides, and among all classes, you hear of lack of confidence and gloomy forebodings of coming evil; Church and State alike seem shaken to their foundations: no one seems to know what to expect next. On one thing alone men seem agreed: they look forward with more fear than hope to the future. Governments seem afraid of their subjects, and subjects seem to have no confidence in their Governments; the rich seem unable to satisfy the poor, and the poor seem unable to trust the rich.

On all sides you hear of restlessness, anarchy, lawlessness, disquiet, envy, jealousy, distrust, suspicion, and discontent. The cement seems to have fallen out of the walls of society: the bands which kept nations together seem to be decaying, snapping, and giving way. One might think that the devil was putting forth special efforts, and allowed to have special power. Never, to my mind, was there such a striking fulfilment of the words of our Lord in Luke: "There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken." (Luke xxi. 25, 26.) Which ever way I turn my eyes, I see something very like an accomplishment of these words. Whether I look to Europe or to America- whether I look to the Continent or my own country- whether I look to England or to Ireland- whether I look to political matters or to ecclesiastical- from

every quarter I get the same report. Every where I see men looking forward with alarm.

In a day like this there is no comfort like that of looking forward to Christ coming again. The Christian who reads his Bible, and believes what it contains, can behold the shaking of all things round him unmoved. He, at any rate, is not uncertain about the future: he, at least, can explain to any one the nature of his expectations. He expects nothing from the rulers of this world: he knows that their boasted laws and reforms will never satisfy mankind, or give peace and freedom to the earth. He expects nothing from the Churches and ecclesiastical systems of Christendom: he knows that they are all breaking down, going to pieces, and melting away. He expects but little from missions, either at home or abroad: he knows that they will call out an elect people for the glory of God: but he looks for little more. His expectation is wholly fixed on Christ's second coming and reign. This is the great event to which he is continually looking forward; this is "the blessed hope" that sustains him, and makes him calm amid confusion. His eye is steadily fixed on his Savior's return. In the darkest hour he does not despair: "Yet a little time," he says, "He that shall come will come, and will not tarry." (Heb. x. 37.)

From the bottom of my soul I pity those who look for the perfecting of the Church or the world by any existing agencies. I pity politicians who dream that any reforms will ever pacify and content mankind; I pity Christians who dream that missionary societies will gradually regenerate the nations, and fill the earth with true religion, until it silently and gently blooms into a state of perfection. Both parties are sowing for themselves bitter disappointment: they might as well expect grapes from thorns or figs from thistles. The only comfortable stand-point in looking into the future, is that which is occupied by the Christian who fixes his hope on the second advent of Jesus Christ.

Does false doctrine rise and spread among professing Christians? Are many falling away on the right hand and left, some going towards Rome, and others leaning towards infidelity? Are myriads bowing down before such idols as the Church, the priesthood, the sacraments, intellect, reason, liberality, charity, earnestness, and the like? The courage of the believer in a personal advent and reign of Christ will not fail. He falls back on the thought that all is ordered for good: all is permitted for wise ends, for the purification of Christians and the exercise of their graces. There is a good time coming: the Lord of the harvest shall soon appear, and send forth His angels to separate the wheat and the tares; then shall the righteous shine forth like the sun. The time is short, the Lord is at hand.

Do kings and rulers throw the nations of the earth into confusion, changing, pulling down, mismanaging disestablishing, rearranging, in their feverish anxiety to make everything work smoothly? Does everything in society gradually become more disorderly, more out of joint, and more full of confusion? Does a grand crash seem impending, when the whole machine of government shall break down and come to a standstill? The believer in Christ's second advent and reign, can view it all without dismay. He knows who has said, "I will overturn, overturn, overturn, until He comes, whose right it is." (Ezek. xxi. 27.) He expects no perfect peace or rest until the Prince of Peace comes, and the King's Son has His own kingdom again, and the prince of this world is cast out. He believes that all shall end well: "The kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdom of our God and of His Christ." (Rev. xi. 15.)

Do the best believers seem to die off and leave the Church below? Are the gaps in families and congregations apparently increasing, which nothing seems to fill up? Do the friends ahead in the voyage of life, who have crossed over and got home before us, begin to seem far more numerous than the friends astern? Does heaven seem to become every year more full, and earth more empty, the Church above more rich, and the Church below more poor? The man who believes in the speedy coming and kingdom of Christ can bear it all without despair. He sorrows not, as those who have no hope; he believes that the parting is only for a small moment, and the meeting shall be forever; he believes that the time is short, the fashion of this world passing away, the first resurrection drawing near, the Conqueror of death about to return. He knows that he shall soon see all the saints again; the whole family shall be reassembled: those who sleep in Jesus shall God bring with Him. Happy is he who believes Christ's second personal advent. Happy is that man who can look forward.

Reader, remember these three looks at Jesus, backward, upward, forward; and make use of them every day. The first is the secret of *peace* of conscience: no peace unless we look backward at the cross of Christ! The second is the secret of real daily *strength and comfort* in our walk with God: little solid comfort unless we look upward to Christ's intercession! The third is the secret of bright and cheerful *hope* in a dark world: no bright prospect unless we look forward to Christ coming again! Backward, upward, forward- these are the three ways in which we should look at Jesus. He that looks at the cross is a wise man; he that looks at the cross and the intercession also, is wiser still; but he that looks at all three- the cross, the intercession, and the coming of Jesus- he is the wisest of all.

(1) Come, now, my reader, and let me wind up all this tract by asking you a friendly question. Let me ask you what you are looking to for your soul's salvation?

You have a soul, you know full well: there is something within that bears witness to that. That there is a world to come, and a judgment too- that there is a life to come for which this life is only a preparatory school- that you were not sent into the world to live the life of a beast, to eat and drink and sleep and care for nothing but your body- all this your conscience testifies. You may not live, perhaps, as if you believed all this- a man might often do you think did not believe it; but for all this, you do believe it. In your heart of hearts, you know that what I say is true.

Once more, then, I ask, what are you looking to for your soul's salvation? Anything or nothing? Something solid and substantial, or something weak and infirm? Reader, for your soul's sake, and as one that must die one day, I charge you to give an answer.

Will you tell me, "You don't know: you hope it will be all right: at any rate you don't pretend to make any profession." You cannot surely think that excuses like these are reasonable, or satisfactory, or sensible, or wise. To leave that uncertain on which your eternal happiness depends- to make no insurance against the future necessities of the only part of you that never dies- to float down the current towards the fall, and yet make no provision for your safety- to muddle away life in meaning, and hoping, and intending, and resolving, and yet never really prepare to meet God- to know that death and judgment are every day drawing nearer, and yet never to make up your mind how you are going to meet them- this, this is not the conduct of a wise man. This is the conduct of a simpleton, an idiot, a madman, or a child.

Oh, "awake you that sleep, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light." "Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." "Strive to enter in at the strait gate," before the Master arise and bar that gate forever. "Labor for the food which endures

unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man is ready to give you." "Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near." "Come to the waters," while the fountain is yet open, "and buy wine and milk without money and without price." "Come to the throne of grace, that you may obtain mercy and find grace." "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come." "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made white as snow: though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." "What do you mean, oh sleeper? arise and call upon your God." "Come unto Christ, and He will give you rest." "Ask, and you shall receive. Seek, and you shall find." "Him that comes unto Christ, He will in nowise cast out." "The blood of Christ can cleanse you from all sin."

Oh, rest not, rest not, rest not, until you know what you are looking to for your soul! Make use of the beautiful passages of Scripture here just put before you. Look to Christ, and you shall live.

(2) Reader, if you know anything of looking unto Jesus, I have only one piece of advice to give you. That advice is, to keep on looking unto Jesus to the end.

That old way, in which saints have now walked for eighteen hundred years, is the only way of safety and the only path of peace. All the wit and wisdom of man will never discern a better way to heaven, and a surer way to keep our souls in comfort. All the Councils that have ever met together- from that true one which met at Jerusalem under James, down to that sham one which met in Rome under Pope Pius IX.- all, all together can never frame a better answer than Paul gives to the question, "What must I do to be saved?" They cannot add one jot or tittle or grain to the Apostle's prescription: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." In other words, that prescription means, "Look to Jesus Christ." Reader, stick to that prescription until you die. Add nothing to it, and take nothing away. You cannot mend or improve it. The least addition or subtraction spoils it altogether.

We hear much in these latter days of the vast progress of intellect, and the enormous results of deep learning. Men tell us complacently that a free handling of Scripture, and a closer critical study of its contents, will give quite a new color to Christianity. I do not believe it for one moment. I believe that all the intellectual power of England, Scotland, Germany, and America will never add one word to "the faith of the saints," or one article to the substance of the Eunuch's confession- "I believe on Jesus Christ as the Son of God."

Reader, beware of novelties. Never leave the old paths. They are marked with the footsteps of myriads of old pilgrims. Not one ever found the old paths lead him wrong. The footsteps are all in one direction. Beware of short-cut paths, however speciously they may be recommended. Priestly absolution, confessionals, human absolutions, may be pressed on your attention as useful helps towards heaven. Beware of them all: they have not profited those that have been occupied therein. They have proved opiates to drug and deaden conscience, but not healing medicine to cure its wounds; they have healed the diseases of the soul slightly, and made them in the end nothing better, but rather worse. Nothing will ever prove better than the old Gospel plan of looking by faith to Jesus Christ. Visible sacrifices will never fill the place of the one true Sacrifice. Visible priests will never prove substitutes for the great High Priest in heaven.

Keep on simply looking to Jesus. Other plans of religion look well in the days of health and prosperity, but break down entirely in the hour of death, and on the bed of sickness. Faith in Jesus will be found better, more useful, more cheering, more comforting, the more it is used.

Keep on looking unto Jesus. Faith shall soon be changed to sight, and hope to certainty. Looking to Jesus on earth by faith, you shall end with seeing Jesus eye to eye in heaven. Those eyes of yours shall look on the head that was crowned with thorns, the hands and feet that were pierced with nails, and the side that was pierced with a spear. You shall find that seeing is the blessed consequence of believing, and that looking at Jesus by faith, ends with seeing Jesus in glory, and living with Jesus for evermore. When you awake up after His likeness, you shall be satisfied.

Oh, eyes that are weary,
And hearts that are sore,
Look off unto Jesus,
And sorrow no more!

The light of His countenance
Shines so bright,
That on earth, as in heaven,
There need be no night.

Looking off unto Jesus
My eyes cannot see
The troubles and dangers
That throng around me.

They cannot be blinded
With sorrowful tears.
They cannot be shadowed
With unbelief fears.

Looking off unto Jesus.
My spirit is blest,
In the world I have turmoil,
In Him I have rest.

The sea of my life
All about me may roar
When I look unto Jesus
I hear it no more.

Looking off unto Jesus,
I go not astray;
My eyes are on Him.
And He shows me the way.

The path may seem dark
As He leads me along,
But following Jesus
I cannot go wrong.

Looking off unto Jesus,
My heart cannot fear:
its trembling is still
When I see Jesus near.

I know that His power
My safeguard will be.
For, "Why are you troubled?"
He says unto me.

Looking off unto Jesus,
Oh, may I be found,
When the waters of Jordan
Encompass me round!

Let them bear me away
In His presence to be:
It is but seeing him nearer
Whom always I see.

Then, then shall I know
The full beauty and grace
Of Jesus, my Lord,
When I stand face to face:

I shall know how His love
Went before me each day,
And wonder that ever
My eyes turned away.

Hold Fast!

By J. C. Ryle

(A charge to the ministers of Liverpool, November 4, 1890)

"Hold fast that which is good." 1 Thessalonians 5:21

My trumpet ought to give no uncertain sound. With abounding temporal prosperity, we seem, as a nation, to be sitting on the edge of a volcano, and at any time may be blown to pieces, and become a wreck and a ruin.

Worst of all, the air seems filled with vague agnosticism and unbelief. Faith languishes and dwindles everywhere, and looks ready to die. The immense majority of men, from the highest to the lowest, appear to think that 'nothing is certain in religion,' and that it does not signify much what you believe. Even in our Universities, the tendency to multiply the 'doubtful things' of Christianity, and to diminish the the essentials, appears to grow and increase every year. All the foundations of faith are out of course.

In times like these, I shall make no apology for charging you to beware of losing, insensibly, your grasp of Christian truth, and holding it with slippery and trembling fingers. I ask you, therefore, to hear me patiently this day, while I try to set before them a list of cardinal points on which I think it of essential importance to 'hold fast that which is good.' Of course I do not expect you all to agree with some of the things I am going to say. Far from it! I lay no claim to infallibility. But at any rate you will not be left in ignorance of my opinions.

I. First and foremost, let me charge you to hold fast the great principle that Christianity is entirely true, and the only religion which God has revealed to mankind.

In reviews, magazines, newspapers, lectures, essays, novels, and sometimes even in sermons, scores of clever writers are incessantly waging war against the very foundations of Christianity. Reason, science, geology, anthropology, modern discoveries, free thought, are all boldly asserted to be on their side. No educated person, we are constantly told nowadays, can really believe supernatural religion, or the plenary inspiration of the Bible, or the possibility of miracles. Such ancient doctrines as the Trinity, the Divinity of Christ, the Personality of the Holy Spirit, the Atonement, the obligation of the Sabbath, the necessity and efficacy of prayer, the

existence of the devil, and the reality of future punishment, are quietly put on the shelf by many professing leaders of modern thought, as useless old almanacs, or contemptuously thrown overboard as lumber! And all this is done so cleverly, and with such an appearance of candor and liberality, and with such compliments to the capacity and nobility of human nature, that multitudes of unstable Christians are carried away as by a flood, and become partially unsettled, if they do not make complete shipwreck of faith.

The existence of this *plague of unbelief* must not surprise us for a moment. It is only an old enemy in a new dress, an old disease in a new form. Since the day when Adam and Eve fell, the devil has never ceased to tempt men not to believe God, and has said, directly or indirectly, 'You shall not die, even if you do not believe.' In 'the latter days' especially, we have warrant of Scripture for expecting an abundant crop of unbelief—'When the Son of Man comes, shall he find faith on the earth?' 'Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse.' 'There shall come in the last days scoffers.' (Luke 18:8; 2Tim. 3:13; 2Pet. 3:3.) Here in England *skepticism* is that natural rebound from semi-popery and superstition, which many wise men have long predicted and expected. It is precisely that swing of the pendulum which far-sighted students of human nature looked for; and it has come.

But, as I tell you not to be surprised at the widespread skepticism of the times, so also I must urge you not to be shaken in mind by it, or moved from your steadfastness. There is no real cause for alarm. The ark of God is not in danger, though the oxen seem to shake it. Christianity has survived the attacks of Hume and Hobbes and Tindal; of Collins and Woolston and Bolingbroke and Chubb; of Voltaire and Paine and Holyoake. These men made a great noise in their day, and frightened weak people; but they produced no more real effect than idle travelers produce by scratching their names on the great Pyramid of Egypt. Depend on it, Christianity in like manner will survive the attacks of the clever writers of these times. The startling novelty of many modern objections to revelation, no doubt, makes them seem more weighty than they really are. It does not follow, however, that *hard knots* cannot be untied, because *our* fingers cannot untie them, or that formidable difficulties cannot be explained, because *our* eyes cannot see through or explain them. When you cannot answer a skeptic, be content to *wait for more light*; but never forsake a great principle. In religion, as in many scientific questions, said Faraday, the famous chemist, 'the highest wisdom is often a judicious suspension of judgment.'

When skeptics and infidels have said all they can, we must not forget that there are **three great broad facts** which they have never explained away; and I am convinced they never can, and never will. Let me tell you briefly what they are. They are very simple facts, and any plain man can understand them.

(i) The first fact is Jesus Christ Himself. If Christianity is a mere invention of man, and the Bible is not from God—how can infidels explain Jesus Christ? His existence in history they cannot deny. How is it that without force or bribery, without arms or money, without flattering man's pride of reason, without granting any indulgence to man's lusts and passions—He has made such an immensely deep mark on the world? Who was He? What was He? Where did He come from? How is it that there has never been one like Him, neither before nor after, since the beginning of time? They cannot explain it. Nothing can explain it but the great foundation-principle of revealed religion, that Jesus Christ is truly God, and that His Gospel is all true.

(2) The second fact is the Bible itself. If Christianity is a mere invention of man, and the Bible is of no more authority than any other uninspired volume, how is it that the book is what it is? How is it that a book written by a few Jews in a remote part of the earth, written at distant and various periods without concert or collusion among the writers; written by members of a nation which, compared to Greece and Rome, did nothing for literature—how is it that this book stands entirely alone, and that there is nothing that even approaches it, for high views of God, for true views of man, for solemnity of thought, for grandeur of doctrine, and for purity of morality? What account can the infidel give of *this book*, so deep, so simple, so wise, so free from defects? He cannot explain its existence and its nature on his principles. We only can do that—who hold that the book is supernatural, and is *the book of God!*

(3) The third fact is the effect which Christianity has produced on the world. If Christianity is a mere invention of man, and not a supernatural, Divine revelation, how is it that it has wrought such a complete alteration in the state of mankind? Any well-read man knows that the moral difference between the condition of the world before Christianity was planted, and since Christianity took root—is the difference between night and day; the difference between the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of the devil. At this very moment I defy anyone to look at the map of the world, and compare the countries where men are Christians—with those where men are not Christians, and to deny that these countries are as different as light and darkness, black and white. How can any infidel explain this on his principles? He cannot do it. We only can who believe that Christianity came down from God, and is the only Divine religion in the world.

Whenever you are tempted to be alarmed at the progress of infidelity, look at the three facts which I have just mentioned, and cast your fears away! Take up your position boldly behind the ramparts of these three facts, and you may safely defy the utmost efforts of modern skeptics. They may often ask you a hundred questions you cannot answer, and start clever problems about geology, or the origin of man, or the age of the world, which you cannot solve. They may vex and irritate you with wild speculations and theories, of which at the time you cannot *prove* the fallacy, though you *feel* it. But be calm and fear not. Remember the three great facts I have named, and boldly challenge them to explain them away. The difficulties of Christianity no doubt are great; but, depend on it, they are nothing compared to the DIFFICULTIES OF INFIDELITY.

II. In the next place, let me charge you to hold fast the authority, supremacy, and Divine inspiration of the whole Bible.

About the **authority** of that blessed book I need not say much. I am addressing men who have answered the solemn questions of the Ordination Services, and subscribed the Thirty-nine Articles. By so doing you have declared your belief that the Scriptures are our Church's rule of faith and practice. The clergyman who preaches and teaches anything which flatly contradicts the Bible, appears to me to forget his own pledges, and deals unfairly with the Church of which he is a minister.

About the **inspiration** of the Bible I feel it necessary to speak more fully. It is, unhappily, one of the chief subjects of controversy in the present day, and one about which you have a right to know what I think.

The subject of inspiration is always important. It is the very keel and foundation of Christianity. If Christians have no Divine book to turn to as the warrant of their doctrine and practice, they have no solid ground for present peace or hope, and no right to claim the

attention of mankind. They are building on a quicksand, and their faith is vain. If the Bible is not given by inspiration throughout, and contains defects and errors—it cannot be a safe guide to heaven. We ought to be able to say boldly, 'We *are* what we are, and we *do* what we do, and *teach* what we teach—because we have here a book which we believe to be, altogether and entirely, the Word of God.'

The subject without doubt is a very difficult one. It cannot be followed up without entering on ground which is dark and mysterious to mortal man. It involves the discussion of things which are miraculous, supernatural, above reason, and cannot be fully explained. But difficulties must not turn us away from any subject in religion. There is not a *science* in the world about which questions may not be asked which no one can answer. It is poor philosophy to say we will believe nothing—unless we can understand everything! We must not give up the subject of inspiration in despair, because it contains things 'hard to be understood.'

One cause of difficulty lies in the fact that the Church has never defined exactly what inspiration means, and consequently many of the best Christians are not entirely of one mind. I am one of those who believe that the writers of the Bible were supernaturally and divinely enabled by God, as no other men ever have been, for the work which they did, and that, consequently, the book they produced is unlike any other book in existence, and stands entirely alone. Inspiration, in short, is a miracle. We must not confound it with intellectual power, such as great poets and authors possess. To talk of Shakespeare and Milton and Byron being inspired, like Moses and Paul, is to my mind, almost profane!

Nor must we confound it with the gifts and graces bestowed on the early Christians in the primitive Church. All the apostles were enabled to preach and work miracles—but not all were inspired to write. We must rather regard it as a special supernatural gift, bestowed on about thirty people out of mankind, in order to qualify them for the special business of writing the Scriptures; and we must be content to allow that, like everything miraculous, *we cannot entirely explain it, though we can believe it.* A miracle would not be a miracle—if it could be explained! That miracles are possible, I do not stop to prove here. I never trouble myself on that subject, until those who deny miracles have fairly grappled with the great fact, that Christ rose again from the dead. I firmly believe that miracles are possible, and have been wrought; and among great miracles I place the fact that men were inspired by God to write the Bible. Inspiration, therefore, being a miracle. I frankly allow that there are difficulties about it which *at present,* I cannot fully solve.

The exact manner, for instance, in which the minds of the inspired writers of Scripture worked when they wrote—I do not pretend to explain. I have no doubt they could not have explained it themselves. I do not admit for a moment that they were mere *machines* holding pens, and, like type-setters in a printing-office, did not understand what they were doing. I abhor the 'mechanical' theory of inspiration. I dislike the idea that men like Moses and Paul were no better than organ-pipes, employed by the Holy Spirit, or ignorant secretaries—who wrote by dictation what they did not understand. I admit nothing of the kind. But I do believe that in some marvelous manner the Holy Spirit made use of the reason, the memory, the intellect, the style of thought, and the peculiar mental temperament of each writer of the Scriptures.

How and in what manner this was done, I can no more explain than I can the union of two natures, God and man, in the Person of our blessed Lord Jesus Christ. I only know that there is both a Divine and a human element in the Bible, and that, while the men who wrote it were really and truly men, the book that they wrote and handed down to us is really and truly the Word of God. I know the *result*—but I do not understand the *process.* The result is, that the Bible is the written Word of God; but I can no more explain the *process*, than I can explain how the water became wine at Cana, or how five loaves fed five thousand men, or how the Apostle Peter walked on the water, or how a few words from our Lord's lips raised Lazarus from the dead. I do not pretend to explain miracles, and I do not pretend to explain fully the miraculous gift of inspiration.

The position I take up is, that while the Bible-writers were not 'machines,' as some sneeringly say—they only wrote what God taught them to write. The Holy Spirit put into their minds thoughts and ideas, and then guided their pens in writing and expressing them. Even when they made use of old records, chronicles, pedigrees, and lists of names, as they certainly did, they adopted, used, and compiled them under the direction of the Holy Spirit. When you read the Bible, you are not reading the unaided, self-taught composition of erring men like yourselves—but thoughts and words which were given by the eternal God. The men who were employed to write the Scripture 'spoke not from themselves.' They 'spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.' (2 Pet. 1:21.) He who holds a Bible in his hand should remember that he holds not the word of *man*—but of *God.* He holds a volume which not only *contains*—but *is* God's Word!

In saying all this, I would not be mistaken. I only claim complete inspiration for the original languages in which the books of the Scripture were written. I admit fully that transcribers and translators were not infallible, and that occasional mistakes may have crept into the sacred text, though amazingly few. When, therefore, some critics object to a word or a verse here and there, reason would tell us—that we should bear with them patiently, and agree to differ. Difficulties about the meaning of many places in the Bible, apparent discrepancies, obscure passages, no doubt, there always will be. But the book, as a whole, contains nothing that is not true.

But unhappily the battle of inspiration does not end here. A school of men has risen among us, who boldly deny the inspiration of large portions of the Old Testament. The book of Genesis, for example, is declared by some to possess no Divine authority, and to be only a collection of interesting fictions. I can find no words to express my entire disagreement with such theories. I maintain firmly—that the Old Testament is of equal authority with the New, and that they stand or fall together. You cannot separate them, any more than you can separate the warp and woof in a piece of woven cloth. The writers of the New Testament continually quote the words of the Old Testament, as of equal authority with their own, and never give the slightest hint that these quotations are not to be regarded as the Word of God. The thrice-repeated saying of our Lord, taken from Deuteronomy, *'It is written,'* when tempted by the devil, is deeply significant and instructive. (Mat. 4:5-10).

But this is not the whole of my objection to these modern theories. I contend that attacks on Genesis in particular involve most dangerous consequences. They tend to dishonor our Lord Jesus Christ and His apostles. That they regard the events and persons mentioned in Genesis as real, historical, and true, and not fictitious—is clear to any honest reader of the New Testament. Now, how can this be explained if Genesis is, as some say, a mere collection of fictions? You cannot explain it except on the supposition that our Lord and His apostles were ignorant, and did not know as much as modern critics do—or else that they secretly suppressed their knowledge in order to avoid offending their hearers. In short, they were either fallible or fallacious, deceived or deceivers. God forbid that we should adopt either one conclusion or the other! I frankly confess that my whole soul revolts from these modern teachings

about Genesis.

When I read that our Lord Jesus Christ is 'One with the Father,' that 'In Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge,' that He is 'the Light of the world,' my mind cannot conceive the possibility of His being ignorant, as latter-day theories about Genesis certainly imply. That blessed Savior to whom I am taught to commit my soul, in the very week that He died for my redemption, spoke of the Flood and the days of Noah as realities! If He spoke ignorantly, with Calvary in full view, it would shake to the foundation my confidence in His power to save me, and would destroy my peace. I abhor the idea of an *ignorant* Savior! From all distrust of any part of the Bible—may you ever be delivered. How any English clergyman can read a lesson from Genesis in church, if he does not believe its inspiration, I cannot understand. And how after this he can gravely ascend the pulpit, select a text from Genesis, preach a sermon on the text, and draw lessons from it, when he does not believe in his heart that the text he has chosen was given by inspiration; this, I say, is one of those things which fill my soul with amazement, and make me tremble for the ark of God.

Well and wisely has this age been called 'an age of downgrade theology.' The man who only admits a *partial* inspiration of the Bible, has been justly compared to one with his head in a fog and his feet on a quicksand. From theories like these may you ever be preserved!

III. In the next place, let me charge you to hold fast the old doctrine of the sinfulness of sin, and the corruption of human nature.

I can find no words to express my sense of the vastness and importance of this subject. It is my firm conviction that a right knowledge of sin lies at the root of all saving religion. The first thing that God does when He makes man a new creature in Christ—is to send light into his heart, and show him that he is a guilty sinner. The material creation in Genesis began with 'light,' and so also does the spiritual creation. I have an equally firm conviction that a low and imperfect view of sin, is the origin of most of the errors, heresies, and false doctrines of the present day. If a man does not realize the extent and dangerous nature of his soul's disease, you cannot wonder if he is content with false or imperfect remedies. I believe that one of the chief wants of the Church in the nineteenth century has been, and is, clearer, fuller teaching about sin.

Sin, I need not remind any Bible reader, consists in doing, saying, thinking, or imagining anything that is not in perfect conformity with the mind and law of God. 'Sin,' as the Scripture says, is 'the transgression of the law.' (1 Jo. 3:4.) The slightest outward or inward departure from absolute mathematical parallelism with God's revealed will and character, constitutes a sin, and at once makes us guilty in God's sight. The Ninth Article of our Church declares that sin is 'the fault and corruption of the nature of every man that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam; whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh lusts always contrary to the spirit; and, therefore, in every person born into the world, it deserves God's wrath and damnation.'

Sin, in short, is that vast moral disease which affects the whole human race, of every rank and class and name and nation and people and tongue, the plague of rulers and statesmen, the divider of Churches, the destroyer of family happiness, the cause of all the miseries in the world.

Now I am obliged to declare my conviction, that the extent and vileness and deceitfulness of sin are a subject which is not sufficiently brought forward in the religious teaching of these days. I do not say it is ignored altogether. But I do say that it is not pressed on congregations in its Scriptural proportion. The consequences are very serious.

One result, I am persuaded, is the immense increase of that sensuous, ceremonial, formal kind of Christianity, which has swept over England like a flood in the last forty years, and carried away so many before it. I can well believe that there is much that is attractive and satisfying—in this system of religion, to a certain order of minds, so long as the conscience is not fully enlightened. But when that wonderful part of our constitution is really awake and alive, I find it hard to believe that a sensuous, ceremonial Christianity will thoroughly satisfy us. A little child is easily quieted and amused with gaudy toys and dolls and rattles, so long as it is not hungry; but once let it feel the cravings of nature within, and we know that nothing will satisfy it but food. Just so it is with man in the matter of his soul. *Music* and *singing* and *flowers* and *banners* and *processions* and *beautiful vestments* and and man-made ceremonies of semi-Romish character, may do well enough for man under certain conditions. But once let him awake and arise from the dead, and he will not rest content with these things. They will seem to him mere solemn triflings—and a waste of time!

Once let him see his sin, and he must see his Savior, in order to obtain rest for his soul. He feels stricken with a deadly disease; and nothing will satisfy him but the Great Physician. He hungers and thirsts; and he must have nothing less than the bread of life. I may seem bold in what I am about to say—but I fearlessly venture the assertion, that one half of the semi-Romanism of the last forty years would never have existed, if English people had been taught more fully and clearly the nature, vileness, and sinfulness of sin.

I believe the likeliest way to cure and mend this defective kind of religion is to bring forward more prominently, and expound more frequently, the Ten Commandments as the true test of sin. They really seem to me to have fallen into the rear of late, and, with the exception of the sixth and eighth, to receive less attention than they deserve. Let us try to revive the old teaching in nurseries, in schools, in training colleges, in universities. Let us not forget that 'the law is good if a man use it lawfully,' and that 'by the law is the knowledge of sin.' (1Ti. 1:8; Rom. 3:20, Rom. 7:7) Let us bring it to the front once more, and press it on men's attention. Let us expound and beat out the Ten Commandments, and show the length and breadth and depth and height of their requirements. It is the way of our Lord in the Sermon on the Mount. It was the way of great divines like Andrews and Leighton and Hopkins and Patrick, whose works on the Commandments are classics to this day.

We would do well to walk in their steps. We may depend upon it, men will never truly come to Christ, and stay with Christ, and live for Christ—unless they feel their sins, and know their need of a Savior. Those whom the Holy Spirit draws to Christ are those whom the Spirit has convinced of sin. Without real conviction of sin, men may seem to come to Christ and follow Him for a season—but they will soon fall away and return to the world.

I commend this point to your private consideration. I suspect that the prevailing desire to make things pleasant to hearers, and the fear of giving offence by plain speaking, have much to say to the neglect of the law in this day. But the testimony of the Bible is clear

—'BY the law is the knowledge of gin.' (Rom. 3:20, Rom. 7:7). The words of Lightfoot are most deeply true, "The consciousness of sin is the true pathway to heaven."

IV. In the next place, let me charge you to hold fast the great foundation-principle of Scripture: that forgiveness of sins is only given to man through the atoning death of Jesus Christ on the cross.

This is a deep and solemn subject; but there is such an immense amount of strange doctrine floating in the air about it, that I dare not pass it over. It seems to me to lie so near the roots of the Gospel, that it is my duty not to be silent.

So far as I can understand, the theory of many appears to be—that it is the *incarnation,* rather than the *sacrifice;* the human nature that Christ took on Him rather than the death He died—which is intended to be the chief ground of hope for our souls. It seems to be held that the blood which 'cleanses from all sin' is not so much the life-blood which Christ shed when He died, as the blood of human nature of which He became partaker when He was born into the world, and by partaking ennobled all Adam's race, and made salvation possible for fallen man.

As to the old doctrine that the blood which flowed on Calvary was the ransom paid for our souls and the price of our redemption from the punishment due to our sins, it seems to be thrown aside by many like an obsolete dogma, unworthy of these latter days. Some even sneer at it as 'blood theology,' and tell us that Christ's death was only the death of a great martyr, and a grand example of perfect submission to God's will—but not a propitiation for sin.

Now I know not what some of you may think of the theory I have tried to delineate; but I must plainly say that I cannot for a moment admit that it is true, and will bear the test of calm examination. The subject is one about which I dare not call any one master.

(1) I cannot reconcile the theory with scores of plain texts in the New Testament, in which the forgiveness of sins, salvation, justification, reconciliation, redemption, deliverance from wrath to come, and peace with God—appear to be inseparably connected with the *sufferings* and *death* of Christ, and not with His life. The expression in Romans, 'We shall be saved by his life' (Rom. 5:10), is sometimes quoted as a reply to what I am saying. But that text does not mean anything but Christ's life of intercession, and it is like the words in Hebrews—'He is able to save to the uttermost, seeing that he ever lives to make intercession.' (Heb. 7:25.) When Moses and Elijah appeared in the Transfiguration, the one subject they were heard speaking about was our Lord's 'decease,' and not His life. (Luk. 9:31.) When the saints in Revelation are shown to us in vision as singing a new song before the throne, the theme of it was, 'You were *slain*, and have *redeemed* us to God by your blood.' (Rev. 5:9.)

(2) I cannot reconcile the theory with the uniform teaching of the Old Testament dispensation about the way of access to God. The great principle which, like a red line, runs through the whole Mosaic ceremonial, is the absolute necessity of sacrifice. Day after day, all the year round, and especially at the Passover, the Jew was taught by emblems and figures that 'without shedding of blood' there was no safety for the soul, and 'no remission of sins.' If the Mosaic system was meant to keep before the mind of Israel, by types and figures, the great future sacrifice of the Lamb of God on Calvary, and redemption by His blood, I can quite see its reasonableness. But if the vicarious death of Christ was not to be the main purpose of His coming into the world, the incessant slaughter of innocent animals on Jewish altars for fourteen hundred years, appears to my eyes an unnecessary waste of animal life, inconsistent with God's mercy towards all His creatures, and admitting of no satisfactory explanation.

I may not dwell longer on this solemn subject. If time permitted, I might remind you how the 'story of the cross' and the blood has always been found the most effective weapon in the mission field all over the globe. But the time limit will not allow me. If others are content to turn away from the 'old paths' of redemption by blood and substitution, and to rest on a vague hope that, somehow or other, they will be saved by Christ's incarnation, I am not their judge. Give me rather for my faith the standing-place of the noble army of Martyrs and the goodly company of Reformers, namely, the blood and passion of Christ. I dare not launch forth into a world unknown on any other plank but this!

V. Let me charge you, in the next place, to hold fast sound and Scriptural views of the work of the Holy Spirit.

Faith in the Holy Spirit, we must always remember, is as truly a part of Christianity as faith in Christ. Every child who repeats the Church Catechism is taught to say, 'I learn to believe in God the Holy Spirit, who sanctifies me and all the elect people of God.' Furthermore, the *work* of the Holy Spirit, though mysterious, will always be known by the *fruits* He produces in the character and conduct of those in whom He dwells. It is like *light* which can be seen, and *fire* which can be felt, and *wind* which causes noticeable results. Where there are no fruits of the Spirit, there is no presence of the Spirit. Those fruits, I need not tell you, are always the same, conviction of sin, true repentance, lively faith in Christ, and holiness of heart and life.

Now I believe this kind of truth about the work of the Holy Spirit needs strongly to be pressed on congregations in the present day. I am afraid there are myriads of professing Christians throughout the land, who really know nothing about the Holy Spirit. They seem to think that as baptized members of a great ecclesiastical corporation, that they possess all the privileges of members. But of the work of the Spirit on their own individual hearts, of conversion, repentance, and faith—they know nothing at all. They are spiritually asleep and dead—and unless they awake are in great danger. To arouse such people to a sense of their unsatisfactory condition, to stir them to see that if the Holy Spirit indwells them, they ought to know something of Him by inward experience, and never rest until they feel this. This is work which I am convinced every clergyman ought to keep continually in view, and I entreat you to do so this day. Not only preach Christ—but take care that you also preach the Holy Spirit.

While we are thankful for the increase of *public* religion, we must never forget that, unless it is accompanied by *private* religion, it is of no real solid value, and may even produce most mischievous effects. Incessant running after sensational preachers; incessant attendance at hot, crowded meetings protracted to late hours; incessant craving after fresh excitement and highly-spiced pulpit novelties—all this kind of thing is calculated to produce a very unhealthy style of Christianity; and, in many cases, I am afraid, the end is utter ruin of soul. For, unhappily, those who make public religion everything, are often led away by mere temporary emotions, after some grand display of ecclesiastical oratory, into professing far more than they really feel. After this, they can only be kept up to the

mark, which they imagine they have reached, by a constant succession of religious excitements. By and by, as with *opium-eaters* there comes a time when their dose loses its power, and a feeling of exhaustion and discontent begins to creep over their minds. Too often, I fear, the conclusion of the whole matter is a relapse into utter deadness and unbelief, and a complete return to the world. And all results from having nothing but a *public* religion! Oh that people would remember that it was not the wind, or the fire, or the earthquake, which showed Elijah the presence of God—but 'the still small voice.' (1Ki. 19:12.)

I desire to lift up a warning voice on this subject. I want to see no decrease of public religion, remember; but I do want to promote an increase of that religion which is *private* between each man and his God, and that *religion which is most beautifully exhibited at home*. I want to see more attention paid to those *passive graces* which are the truest evidence of the work of the Spirit. To be religious among the religious, and spiritual among the spiritual, all this is comparatively easy. But to adorn the Gospel, and be Christlike, in the midst of a large family circle of unconverted and uncongenial relatives; to be always patient, gentle, loving, kind, unselfish, good-tempered; this is the grandest fruit of the Holy Spirit. We need more of this kind of religion. The *root* of a plant or tree makes no show above ground. If you dig down to it and examine it, it is a poor, dirty, coarse-looking thing, and not nearly so beautiful to the eye as the fruit or leaf or flower. But that despised root, nevertheless, is the true source of all the life, health, vigor, and fertility which your eyes see, and without it the plant or tree would soon die. Now, private religion is the root of all vital Christianity. Without it we may make a brave show in the meeting or on the platform, and sing loud, and shed many tears, and have a name to live, and the praise of man. But without it we are dead before God.

Our forefathers had far fewer means and opportunities than we have. Full religious meetings and crowds, except occasionally in a large room or in a field, when such men as Whitefield or Wesley preached, these were things of which they knew nothing. Their proceedings were neither fashionable nor popular, and often brought on them more persecution and abuse—than praise. But the few weapons they used, they used well. I have a strong impression that they had among them more of the presence of the Holy Spirit than we have. In quantity of religious *profession* we have far surpassed them; in *quality*, I fear, we are sadly behind. With less noise and applause from man, they made, I believe, a far deeper mark for God on their generation than we do, with all our conferences, and meetings, and mission rooms, and halls, and multiplied religious appliances. Their converts, I suspect, like the old-fashioned cloths and linens, wore better and lasted longer, and faded less and kept color, and were more stable and rooted and grounded than many of the new-born babes of this day.

And what was the reason of all this? Simply, I believe, that they gave more attention to *private* religion than we generally do. There was more deep, solid work, quiet work of the Holy Spirit, among them. There was more private Bible-reading and private prayer. They walked closely with God, and honored Him in private, and so He honored them in public. Oh, let us follow them—as they followed Christ! Let us exhort our people to go and do likewise. Let us honor the Holy Spirit more than we have done.

After all, there is a world to come—a life after death, an eternity either in heaven or hell. We must all die at last, and stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, when we rise again. Never, never let us cease to maintain and proclaim these great realities, whether men will hear or whether they will forbear.

VI. Let me charge you, in the last place, to hold fast the teaching of Scripture about the state of man after death.

This is a very solemn and painful topic, and flesh and blood naturally shrink from its contemplation. But so many strange doctrines are floating in the air about the whole subject, that I dare not refuse to consider it. The language of the Bible about 'judgment to come' and the future punishment of those who die impenitent, appear to me so distinct, that I do not see how it can be explained away. Those who object to the doctrine of future punishment, talk loudly about love and charity, and say that it does not harmonize with the merciful and compassionate character of God. But what says the Scripture? Who ever spoke such loving and merciful words as our Lord Jesus Christ? Yet His are the lips which three times over describe the consequence of impenitence and sin, as *'the worm that never dies, and the fire that is not quenched.'* He is the Person who speaks in one sentence of the wicked going away into 'everlasting punishment,' and the righteous into 'life eternal.' (Mar. 9:43-48; Mat. 25:46)

Who does not remember the Apostle Paul's words about charity? Yet he is the very Apostle who says *the wicked 'shall be punished with everlasting destruction'* (2 Th. 1:9). Who does not know the spirit of love which runs all through John's Gospel and Epistles? Yet the beloved Apostle is the very writer in the New Testament who dwells most strongly, in the book of Revelation, on the reality and eternity of future woe! What shall we say to these things? Shall we be wise above that which is written? Shall we admit the dangerous principle that words in Scripture do not mean what they appear to mean? If so, where are we to stop? Is it not far better to lay our hands on our mouths and say, 'Whatever God has written must be true!' *'Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are your judgments.'* (Rev. 16:7.)

I lay no claim to any peculiar knowledge of Scripture. I feel daily that I am no more *infallible* than the Pope of Rome. But I must speak according to the light which God has given to me, and I do not think I would do my duty if I did not raise a warning voice on this subject, and try to put our ministers on their guard. Six thousand years ago, sin entered into the world by the devil's daring falsehood—'You shall not surely die!' (Gen. 3:4.) At the end of six thousand years, the great enemy of mankind is still using his old weapon, and trying to persuade men that they may live and die in sin, and yet at some distant period may be finally saved. Let us not be ignorant of his devices. Let us walk steadily in the old paths. Let us hold fast the old truth, and believe that, as the happiness of the saved is eternal, so also is the misery of the lost.

(i) Let us hold it fast in the interest of the whole system of revealed religion. What was the use of God's Son becoming incarnate, agonizing in Gethsemane, and dying on the cross to make atonement—if men can be finally saved *without believing* on Him? Where is the slightest proof in Scripture, that saving faith in Christ's blood can ever begin *after* death? Where is the need of the Holy Spirit, if sinners are at last to enter heaven *without conversion* and renewal of heart? Where can we find the smallest evidence that any one can be born again *after* death, and have a new heart—if he dies in an unregenerate state? If a man may escape eternal punishment at last, *without faith in Christ* or sanctification of the Spirit, sin is no longer an infinite evil, and there was no need for Christ to die on Calvary!

(2) Let us hold fast the doctrine of future eternal punishment, for the sake of holiness and morality. I can imagine

nothing so pleasant to men, as the fallacious theory that we may live in sin—and yet escape eternal perdition; that although we 'are slaves to many wicked desires and evil pleasures' while we are here in this world, we shall somehow or other, all get to heaven hereafter! Only tell the young man who is 'wasting his substance in riotous living,' that there is a heaven at last, even for those who live and die in sin, and he is never likely to turn from evil. What does it signify how he lives, if there is no 'judgment to come?' Why should he repent and take up the cross—if he can get to heaven at last without trouble?

(3) Finally, let us hold it fast for the sake of the common hopes of all God's saints. Let us distinctly understand that every blow struck at the eternity of *punishment*, is an equally heavy blow at the eternity of *reward*. It is impossible to separate the two things. No clever theological definition can divide them. They stand or fall together. The same language is used, the same figures of speech are employed, when the Bible speaks about either condition. Every attack on the *duration of hell* is also an attack on the *duration of heaven*. It is a deep and true saying, 'With the sinner's fear—our hope departs.'

I turn from this section, with a strong sense of its painfulness. I feel keenly, with Robert M'Cheyne, that *'it is a difficult subject to handle lovingly.'* But I turn from it with an equally strong conviction, that if we believe the Bible, we must never give up anything which it contains. From hard, austere, and unmerciful theology, *Good Lord, deliver us!* If men are not saved, it is not because God does not love them, and is not willing to save them—but because they 'will not come to Christ.' (Joh. 5:40.) But we must not be wise above that which is written. No morbid liberality, so called, must induce us to reject anything which God has revealed about the next world. Men sometimes talk exclusively about God's mercy and love and compassion, as if He had no other attributes, and leave out of sight entirely His *holiness* and His *purity*, His *justice* and His unchangeableness, and His *hatred of sin*. Let us beware of falling into this delusion. It is a growing evil in these latter days.

Low and inadequate views of the unutterable vileness and filthiness of sin, and of the unutterable purity of the eternal God, are fertile sources of error about man's future state. Let us think of the mighty Being with whom we have to do, as He Himself declared His character to Moses, saying, 'The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, patience and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin.' But let us not forget the solemn clause which concludes the sentence—'And who will by no means clear the guilty.' (Exo. 34:6-7.) *Unrepented sin is an eternal evil, and can never cease to be sin; and He with whom we have to do is an eternal God!*

Never Perish!

J. C. Ryle

"They shall never perish!" John 10:28

There are two points in religion on which the teaching of the Bible is very plain and distinct. One of these points is the fearful danger of the ungodly; the other is the perfect safety of the righteous. One is the happiness of those who are converted; the other is the misery of those who are unconverted. One is the blessedness of being in the way to heaven; the other is the wretchedness of being in the way to hell.

I hold it to be of the utmost importance that these two points should be constantly impressed on the minds of professing Christians. I believe that the exceeding privileges of the children of God, and the deadly peril of the children of the world, should be continually set forth in the clearest colors before the Church of Christ. I believe that the difference between the man in Christ, and the man not in Christ, can never be stated too strongly and too fully. *Reserve* on this subject, is a great injury to the souls of men. Wherever such *reserve* is practiced—the careless will not be aroused, believers will not be established, and the cause of God will receive damage.

Reader, perhaps you are not aware what a vast store of *comforting truths* which the Bible contains for the peculiar benefit of real Christians. There is a spiritual treasure house in the Word which many may never enter, and some eyes have not so much as seen. There you will find many a golden truth, besides the old first principles of repentance, faith and conversion. There you will see in glorious array—the everlasting election of the saints in Christ—the special love with which God loved them before the foundation of the world—their mystical union with their risen Head in heaven, and His consequent sympathy with them—their interest in the perpetual intercession of Jesus, their High Priest—their liberty of daily communion with Father and the Son—their full assurance of hope—their perseverance to the end.

These are some of the *precious things* laid up in Scripture for those who love God. These are truths which some neglect from *ignorance*. Like the Spaniards in California, they know not the rich mines beneath their feet! These are truths which some neglect from *false humility*. They look at them afar off with fear and trembling—but dare not apply them to themselves. But these are truths which God has given for our learning, and which you and I are bound to study. It is impossible to neglect them without inflicting injury upon ourselves.

It is to one special truth in the list of a believer's privileges, which I now desire to direct your attention this day. That truth is the doctrine of perseverance—the doctrine that true Christians shall never perish or be cast away. It is a truth which the natural heart has bitterly opposed in every age. It is a truth which for many reasons deserves particular attention at the present time. Above all, it is a truth with which the *happiness* of all God's children is most closely connected.

There are four things which I propose to do in considering the subjects of perseverance.

I. I will explain what the doctrine of perseverance means.

II. I will show the Scriptural grounds on which the doctrine is built.

III. I will point out some reasons why many reject the doctrine.

IV. I will mention some reasons why the doctrine is of great practical importance.

I approach the subject with diffidence, because I know it is one on which holy men do not see alike. But God is my witness, that in writing this tract, I have no desire to promote any but of Scriptural truth. In pleading for perseverance, I can say with a good conscience that I firmly believe I am pleading for an important part of the Gospel of Christ. May God the Spirit guide both writer and reader into all truth! May that blessed day soon come when all shall know the Lord perfectly, and differences and divisions pass away forever!

I. I will first explain what I mean by the doctrine of perseverance.

It is of the utmost importance to make this point clear. It is the very foundation of the subject. It lies at the threshold of the whole argument. In all discussions of disputed points in theology, it is impossible to be too accurate in defining terms. Half the abuse which has unhappily been poured on the Biblical doctrine of perseverance, has arisen from a thorough misunderstanding of the doctrine in question. Its adversaries have fought with phantoms of their own creation, and spent their strength in beating the air.

When I speak of the doctrine of perseverance, I mean this. I say that the Bible teaches that true Christians shall persevere in their religion to the end of their lives. They shall never perish. They shall never be lost. They shall never be cast away. Once in Christ—they shall always be in Christ. Once made children of God by adoption and grace—they shall never cease to be His children and become children of the devil. Once endued with the saving grace of the Spirit—that grace shall never be taken from them. Once pardoned and forgiven—they shall never be deprived of their pardon. Once joined to Christ by living faith—their union shall never be broken off. Once called by God into the narrow way that leads to life—they shall never be allowed to fall into hell. In a word, every man, woman and child on earth who receives *saving grace*—shall sooner or later receive *eternal glory!* Every soul that is once justified and washed in Christ's blood—shall be found safe at Christ's right hand in the day of judgment.

Reader, such statements as this sound tremendously strong. I know that well. But I am not going to leave the subject here—I must dwell upon it a little longer. I desire to clear the doctrine I am defending from the *cloud of misrepresentation* by which many darken it. I want you to see it in its own proper dress—not as it is portrayed by the hand of ignorance and prejudice—but as it is set forth in the Scripture of truth.

Perseverance is a doctrine which the *ungodly* and *worldly* have nothing to do with. It does not belong to that vast multitude who have neither knowledge, nor thought, nor faith, nor fear, nor anything else of Christianity except the mere name. It is *not* true of *them*—that they will "never perish." On the contrary, except they repent, they will certainly come to a miserable end.

Perseverance is a doctrine which *hypocrites* and *false professors* have nothing to do with. It does not belong to those unhappy people whose religion consists in *talk*, and *words*, and a *form* of godliness, while their hearts are destitute of the grace of the Spirit. It is not true of them, that they will "never perish." On the contrary, except they repent, they will certainly be lost forever.

Perseverance is the peculiar privilege of *real*, true, spiritual Christians. It belongs to the *sheep* of Christ who hear His voice and follow Him. It belongs to those who are *washed*, and *justified*, and *sanctified* in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of God. It belongs to those who *repent*, and *believe* in Christ, and live *holy* lives. It belongs to those who have been born again, and converted, and made new creatures by the Holy Spirit. It belongs to those who are of a broken and contrite heart, and mind the things of the Spirit, and bring forth the fruits of the Spirit. It belongs to the *elect* of God, who cry to Him night and day. It belongs to those who know the Lord Jesus by experience, and have *faith*, and *hope*, and *charity*. It belongs to those who are *fruit-bearing* branches of the vine—the *wise* virgins—the *light* of the world—the *salt* of the earth—the *heirs* of the kingdom—the *followers* of the Lamb. These are they whom the Bible calls the *saints*. And it is the saints and the saints alone—of whom it is written, that they shall "never perish."

Does anyone suppose that what I am saying applies to none but *eminent* saints? Does anyone think that people like apostles and prophets, and martyrs may perhaps persevere to the end—but that it cannot be said of the common sort of believers? Let him know that he is entirely mistaken. Let him know this privilege of perseverance belongs to the whole family of God—to the *youngest*—as well as the oldest; to the *weakest*—as well as the strongest; to the *babes* in grace—as well as to the old pillars of the Church.

The least faith shall as certainly continue *indestructible* as the greatest. The least *spark of grace* shall prove as unquenchable as the most burning and shining light. Your *faith* may be very feeble, your *grace* may be very weak, your *strength* may be very small, you may feel that in spiritual things you are but a child. Yet fear not, neither be afraid. It is not on the *quantity* of a man's grace—but on the *truth* and *genuineness* of it—which the promise turns. A *penny* is as truly a current coin of the country, as a *dollar*, though it is not so valuable. Wherever sin is truly repented of, and Christ is truly trusted, and holiness is truly followed—there is a work which shall never be overthrown. It shall stand when the earth and all the works thereof, shall be burned up.

Reader, there are yet some things to be said about perseverance, to which I must request your special attention. Without them the account of the doctrine would be imperfect and incomplete. The mention of them may clear up some of the difficulties which surround the subject, and throw light on some points of Christian experience, which God's children find hard to understand.

Remember, then, that when I tell you that that believers shall persevere to the end—I do not for a moment say that they shall never **fall into sin**. They may fall sadly, foully, and shamefully, to the scandal of true religion, to the injury of their own deep and bitter sorrow. *Noah* once fell into drunkenness. *Abraham* twice said falsely that Sarah was only his sister. *Jacob* deceived his father Isaac. *Moses* spoke unadvisedly with his lips. *David* committed horrible adultery. *Solomon* lost his first love, and was led away by his many wives. *Hezekiah* forgot God, and boasted of his riches. *Peter* denied his Lord three times with an oath. The *apostles* all forsook Christ in the garden.

All these are cases in point. They are all melancholy proofs that Christians may fall. But believers shall never fall *totally*, *finally*, and *completely*. They shall always rise again from their falls by repentance, and renew their walk with God. Though sorely humbled and cast down—they never entirely lose grace. The *comfort* of grace, they may lose—but not the *being* of grace. Like the moon under an eclipse, their light is for a season turned into darkness; but they are not rejected and cast away. Like the *trees in winter*, they may show neither *leaves* nor *fruit* for a time; but the *life* is still in their roots. But they never perish.

Remember for another thing, that when I say believers shall persevere to the end—I do not mean that they shall have no **doubts** and

fears about their own safety. So far from this being the case, the holiest men of God are sometimes sorely troubled by anxieties about their own spiritual condition. They see so much *weakness* in their own hearts, and find their practice come so short of their desires, that they are strongly tempted to doubt the reality of their own grace, and to imagine that they are but hypocrites, and shall never reach Heaven at all.

To **be safe** is one thing—to **feel sure** that we are safe is quite another. There are many true believers who never enjoy the *full assurance* of hope all their days. Their faith is so weak and their sense of sin so strong—that they never feel confident of their own saving interest in Christ. Many a time they could say with David, "I shall one day perish" (1 Sam. 27. 1); and with Job, "Where is my hope?" (Job 17. 15.) The joy and peace in believing, which some feel, and the witness of the Spirit, which some experience, are things which some believers, whose faith is impossible to deny, never appear to attain. Called as they evidently are by the grace of God—they never seem to taste the full comfort of the calling. But they are *perfectly safe*, though they themselves refuse to know it.

> "More happy—but not more secure,
> are the glorified spirits in heaven."

Full assurance is not necessary to salvation. The *absence* of full assurance is no argument against a man's perseverance to the end. That mighty master of theology, John Bunyan, knew well what he wrote, when he told us that Despondency and Much-afraid got safely to the celestial city at last, as well as Mr. Valiant-for-the-truth. It is as true of the most *doubting* child of God, as it is of the strongest, that he shall "never perish." He may never *feel* it. But it is *true*?

Remember, in the last place, that the certain perseverance of believers, does not free them from the necessity of watching, praying, and using means, or make it needless to ply them with practical exhortations. So far from this being the case—it is just by the use of means, that God enables them to continue in the faith. He draws them with the cords of a man. He uses warnings and conditional promises as part of the machinery by which He insures their final safety. The very fact that they *despised* the helps and ordinances which God has appointed, would be a plain proof that they had no grace at all—and were on the road to destruction. Paul before his shipwreck had a special revelation from God, that he and all the ship's company should get safely to land. But it is a striking fact that he said to the soldiers, "Except the seamen abide in the ship—you cannot be saved." (Acts 27:31.) He knew that the end was insured—but believed also that it was an end to be reached by the use of certain means.

The cautions, and conditional promises, and admonitions to believers, with which Scripture abounds, are all part of the Divine agency by which their perseverance is effected. An old writer says, "they do not imply that the saints can fall away—but they are preservatives to keep them from falling away." The man who thinks he can do without such cautions and despises them as legal, may well be suspected as an impostor, whose heart has never yet been renewed. The man who has been really taught by the Spirit will generally have a humble sense of his own weakness, and be thankful for anything which can quicken his conscience and keep him on his guard. Those who persevere to the end are not dependent on any means—but still they are not independent of them. Their final salvation does not hang on their obedience to practical exhortations—but it is just in taking heed to such exhortations that they will always continue to the end. It is the diligent, the watchful, the prayerful and the humble—to whom belongs the promise, "They shall never perish."

Reader, I have now given you an account of what I mean when I speak of the doctrine of perseverance. This, and this only, is the doctrine that I am prepared to defend in this tract. I ask you to weigh well what I have said, and to examine the statement I have made on every side. I believe it will stand inspection.

It will not do to tell us that this doctrine of perseverance has any tendency to encourage careless and ungodly living. Such a charge is utterly destitute of truth. It cannot justly be brought forward. I have not a word to say on behalf of anyone who lives in willful sin, however high his profession may be. He is deceiving himself. He has a lie in his hand. He has none of the marks of God's elect. The perseverance I plead for, is not that of *sinners*—but of *saints*. It is not a perseverance in carnal and ungodly ways—but a perseverance in the way of faith and grace. Show me a man who deliberately lives an unholy life, and yet boasts that he is converted and shall never perish—and I say plainly, that I see nothing hopeful about him. He may know all mysteries, and speak with the tongue of angels—but so long as his life is unaltered, *he is on the highway to hell!*

It will not do to tell us that this doctrine of perseverance, is merely a piece of Calvinism. Nothing is easier than to get up a prejudice against a truth, by giving it a bad name. Men deal with doctrines they do not like, much as Nero did when he persecuted the early Christians. They dress them up in a hideous garment and then hold them up to scorn and run them down! The perseverance of the saints is often treated in this manner. People stave it off by some sneering remark about Calvinism, and think they have settled the question.

Surely it would be more fitting to inquire whether perseverance was taught in the Bible 1400 years before Calvin was born. The question to be decided is not whether the doctrine is *Calvinistic*—but whether it is *Scriptural*. The words of one deserve to be widely known. "Take especial care before you aim your shafts at Calvinism, that you know what Calvinism is—and what is not; that in the mass of doctrine which it is of late become the fashion to abuse under the name of Calvinism, you can distinguish with certainty between that part of which is nothing better than Calvinism, and that which belongs to our common Christianity and the general faith of the reformed Churches—lest, when you mean only to attack Calvinism you should unwarily attack something more sacred and of a higher origin."

II. I now proceed to show the Scriptural grounds on which the doctrine of perseverance is built.

I need hardly say that the Bible is the *only* test by which the truth of every religious doctrine can be tried. The words of the sixth Article of the Church of England deserve to be written in letters of gold: "Whatever is not read in the Holy Scripture, nor may be proved thereby—is not to be required of any man that it should be believed as an article of the faith." By that rule I am content to abide. I ask no man to believe the final perseverance of the saints, unless the doctrine can be proved of the Word of God. *One plain verse of Scripture, to my mind, outweighs the most logical conclusions to which human reason can attain.*

Reader, in bringing forward those texts of Scripture on which this tract is founded, I purposely abstain from quoting from the Old Testament. I do so, lest any should say that the Old Testament promises belong exclusively to the Jewish people as a nation, and are not available in a disputed question affecting individual believers. I do not admit the soundness of this argument—but I will not give

anyone the chance of using it. I find proofs in abundance in the New Testament, and to them I shall confine myself.

I shall write down the texts which appear to me to prove final perseverance, without note or comment. I will only ask you to observe as you read them, how deep and broad is the foundation on which the doctrine rests. Observe that it is not for any strength or goodness of their own—that the saints shall continue to the end and never fall away. They are in themselves weak, and frail, and liable to fall like others. Their safety is based on the *promise* of God, which was never yet broken—on the *election* of God, which cannot be in vain—on the *power* of the great Mediator Christ Jesus, who is Almighty—on the *inward work of the Holy Spirit*, which cannot be overthrown. I ask you to read the following texts carefully, and see whether it is not so.

"My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all ; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand." (John 10:27-29.)

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:35-39.)

"They went out from us—but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us." (1 John 2:19.)

"Truly, truly, I say unto you, He who hears my word, and believes on Him that sent Me, has everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." (John 5:24.)

"I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any man eats of this bread, he shall live forever." (John 6:51.)

"Because I live, you shall live also." (John 14:19.)

"Whoever lives and believes in Me, shall never die." (John 11:26.)

"By one offering, He has perfected forever those who are sanctified." (Heb. 10:14.)

"He who does the will of God abides forever." (1 John 2:17.)

"Sin shall not have dominion over you." (Romans 6:14.)

"The very hairs of your head are all numbered." (Romans 6:14.)

"A bruised reed shall He not break, and smoking flax shall He not quench." (Matt. 12:20.)

"Who shall also confirm you to the end, that you may be blameless in the day of Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Cor. 1:8.)

"Kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time." (1 Peter 1:5.)

"Preserved in Jesus Christ, and called." (Jude 1.)

"The Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto His heavenly kingdom." (2 Tim. 4:18.)

"1 pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He who calls you, who also will do it." (1 Thess. 5:23,24.)

"The Lord is faithful, who shall establish you, and keep you from evil." (2 Thess. 3:3.)

"God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted above that you are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it." (1 Cor. 10:13.)

"God willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath; "That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." (Heb. 6:17,18.)

"Fear not little flock; for it is your father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." (Luke 12:32.)

"This is the Father's will who has sent Me, that of all which He has given Me, I should lose nothing—but should raise it up at the last day." (John 6:39.)

"The foundation of God stands sure, having this seal—the Lord knows them that are His." (2 Tim. 2:19)

"Whom He did predestinate, those He also called; and whom He called, those He also justified; and whom He justified, those He also glorified." (Romans 8. 30.)

"God has not appointed us unto wrath—but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Thess. 5:9.)

"God has from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth." (2 Thess. 2:13.)

"The vessels of mercy, which He had afore prepared unto glory." (Romans 9. 23.)

"The gifts and calling of God are without repentance." (Romans 11:29.)

"If it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect." (Matt. 24:24.)

"He is able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them." (Heb. 7:25.)

"He is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy." (Jude 24.)

"1 know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." (2 Tim. 1:12.)

"1 have prayed for you—That your faith fail not." (Luke 22. 32.)

"Holy Father, keep through Your own name those whom You have given Me." (John 17:11.)

"1 pray not that you should take them out of the world—but that you should keep them from the evil." (John 17:15.)

"1 will that day they also whom you have given Me, be with Me where I am." (John 17:24.)

"If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son; much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." (Romans 5:10.)

"The Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it sees Him not, neither knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you, and shall be in you." (John 14:17.)

"Being confident of this very thing, that He who begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." (Phil. 1:6.)

"The anointing which you have received of Him abides in you; and you need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teaches you of all things, and is truth, and no lie, and even as it has taught you, you shall abide in Him." (John 2:27.)

"The Holy Spirit of God, whereby you are sealed unto the day of redemption." (Ephes. 4:30.)

"You were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the pledge of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession." (Ephes. 1:13, 14.)

"Born again, not of corruptible seed—but of incorruptible." (1 Peter 1:23.)

"He has said—I will never leave you nor forsake you." (Heb. 13:5.)

Reader, I lay before you these forty-four texts of Scripture, and ask your serious attention to them. I repeat that I will make no comment on them. I had rather leave them to the honest common sense of all who read the Bible. Some of these texts, no doubt, bring out the doctrine of final perseverance more clearly than others. About the interpretation of some of them, men's judgments may differ widely. But there are not a few of the forty-four which appear to my mind so plain, that were I to invent words to conform my views, I would despair of inventing any that would convey my meaning so unmistakably.

I am far from saying that these texts are all the Scriptural evidence that might be brought forward. I am satisfied that the doctrine maintained in this tract might be confirmed by other arguments of great might and power.

I might point to the *attributes of God's character* revealed in the Bible—and show how His wisdom, unchangeableness, and power, and love, and glory are all involved in the perseverance of the saints. If the elect may finally perish, what becomes of God's counsel about them in eternity, and His doings for them in time?

I might point to all the *offices which the Lord Jesus fills*, and show what discredit is thrown on His discharge of them, if any of His believing people can finally be lost.

What kind of *Head* would He be—if any of the members of His mystical body could be torn from Him? What kind of *Shepherd* would He be—if a single sheep of His flock was left behind in the wilderness? what kind of *Physician* would He be, if any patient under His hand were at length incurable? What kind of *High Priest* would He be—if any name once written on His heart were found missing when He makes up His jewels? What kind of *Husband* would He be—if He and any soul once united to Him by faith were ever put asunder?

Finally, I might point to the great fact that there is not a single **example** in all Scripture of any one of God's elect ever finally making shipwreck and going to hell. We read false prophets and hypocrites. We read of fruitless branches, stony ground, and thorny ground hearers, virgins without oil in their vessels, servants who bury their talents. We read of Balaam, and Lot's wife, and Saul, and Judas Iscariot, and Ananias and Sapphira, and Demas. We see their hollow characters. We are told of their end. They have no root. They are rotten at the heart. They endure for a while. They go at last to their own place. But there is not a single instance in the whole Bible of anyone falling away—who ever showed unquestionable evidences of grace. Men like Abraham, and Moses, and David, and Peter, and Paul *always* hold on their way. They may *slip*. They may *fall for a season*. But they never *entirely depart from God*. They never perish. Surely if the saints of God can be cast away, it is a striking fact that the Bible should not have given us one single plain example of it.

But time and space would fail me if I were to enter into the field which I have just pointed out. I think it better to rest my case on the text which I have already given. The mind to which these texts carry no conviction, is not likely to be influenced by other arguments. To myself they appear, when taken altogether, to contain such an immense mass of evidence, that I dare not, as a Christian man, deny to be true. I dare not, because I feel at this rate I might dispute the truth of *any* doctrine in the Gospel. I feel that if I could explain away such plain texts as some of those I have quoted—that I could explain away almost all the leading truths of Christianity.

Reader, I am quite aware that there are some texts and passages of Scripture which appear at first sight to teach a *contrary* doctrine to that which I maintain in this tract. I know that many attach great weight to these texts, and consider them to prove that the saints of God *may* perish and fall away. I can also say that I have examined these texts with attention—but have found in them no reason to alter my opinion on the subject of perseverance. Their number is small. Their meaning is unquestionably more open to dispute than

that of many of the forty-four I have quoted. They all of them admit of being interpreted so as not to contradict the doctrine of perseverance.

I hold it to be an infallible rule in the exposition of Scripture, that when two texts seem to contradict one another, the less plain must give way to the more plain, and the weak must give way to the strong. That doctrine which reconciles most texts of Scripture is most likely to be right. That doctrine which makes most texts quarrel with one another, is most likely to be wrong.

I ask you, if not convinced by all I have said hitherto, to put down the texts I have quoted on behalf of perseverance, and the texts commonly quoted against it, in two separate lists. Weigh them one against another. Judge them with fair and honest judgment. Which list contains the greatest number of positive, unmistakable assertions? Which list contains the greatest number of sentences which cannot be explained away? Which list is the strongest? Which list is the weakest? Which list is the most flexible? Which list is the most unbending? If it were possible in a world like this to have this question fairly tried by an unprejudiced, intelligent jury, I have not the least doubt which way the verdict would go. It is my own firm belief and conviction that the final perseverance of the saints is so deeply founded on Scriptural grounds, that so long as the Bible is the Judge, it cannot be overthrown.}

III. The third thing I propose to do, is to point out the reasons why many reject the doctrine of perseverance.

It is impossible to deny that multitudes of professing Christians entirely disagree with the views expressed in this. I am quite aware that many regard them with abhorrence, as dangerous, enthusiastic, and fanatical, and lose no opportunity of warning people against them. I am also aware that among those who hold that the saints of God may fall away and perish, are to be found many holy, self-denying, spiritually-minded people —people at whose feet I would sit in Heaven, though I cannot approve of all their teaching upon earth.

This being the case, it becomes a matter of deep interest to find out, if we can, the *reasons why the doctrine of perseverance is so often refused.* How is it that the doctrine for which so much Scripture can be alleged, should be stoutly opposed? How is it that a doctrine which for the first hundred years of the Reformed Church of England it was hardly allowable to call in question, should now be so frequently rejected? What new views can have risen up in the last two centuries which make it necessary to discharge this good old servant of Christ? I am confident that such inquiries are of deep importance in the present day. There is far more in this question than appears at first sight. I am satisfied that I am not wasting time in endeavoring to throw a little light on the whole subject.

I desire to clear the way by conceding that many good people refuse the doctrine of perseverance for no reason whatever, excepting that it is too strong for them. There are vast numbers of true-hearted Christians just now who never seem able to bear anything strong. Their religious constitution appears so feeble, and their spiritual digestion so weak, that they must always be "fed with milk—and not with meat." Talk to them strongly about *grace*—and they put you down as an Antinomian! Talk strongly about *holiness*—and you are thought legal! Speak strongly of *election*—and you are considered a narrow-minded Calvinist! Speak strongly about *responsibility* and free agency—and you are regarded as an Arminian! In short, they can bear nothing strong of any kind—or in any direction. Of course they cannot receive the doctrine of perseverance.

I leave these people alone. I am sorry for them. There are sadly too many of them in the Churches of Christ just now. I can only wish them better spiritual health, and less narrowness of views, and a quicker growth in spiritual knowledge. The people I have in my mind's eye in this part of my tract, are of a different class, and to them I now address myself.

(1) I believe one reason why many do not hold perseverance, is their general ignorance of the whole system of Christianity. They have no clear idea of the nature, place, and proportion of the various doctrines which compose the Gospel. Its several truths have no definite position in their minds. Its general outline is not mapped out in their understandings. They have a vague notion that it is a right thing to belong to the Church of Christ, and to believe all the Articles of the Christian faith. They have a floating, misty idea that Christ has done certain things for them, and that they ought to do certain things for Him, and that if they do them it will be all right at last. But beyond this they really know nothing. Of the great systematic statements in the Epistles to the Romans, Galatians, and Hebrews, they are profoundly ignorant. As to a clear account of Justification, you might as well ask them to square the circle; or write a letter in Sanskrit. It is a subject they have not even touched with the tips of their fingers. This is a sore disease, and only too common in England. Unhappily it is the disease of thousands who pass muster as excellent Churchmen. It is absurd to expect such people to hold perseverance. When a man does not know what it is to be *justified*—he cannot of course understand what it is to *persevere* to the end.

(2) I believe another reason why many do not hold perseverance, is their dislike to any system of religion which draws distinctions between man and man. There are not a few who entirely disapprove of any Christian teaching which divides the congregation into different classes, and speaks of one class of people as being in a better and more favorable state before God than another. Such people cry out, "that all teaching of this kind is uncharitable; that we ought to hope well of everybody, and suppose everybody will go to heaven." They think it downright wrong to say that one man has faith and another not; that one a child of God, and another a child of the devil; that one a saint and another a sinner. "What right have we to think anything about it?" they say. "We cannot possibly know. Those whom we call good, are very likely no better than others, —hypocrites, impostors, and the like. Those of whom we think badly are very probably quite as much in the way to heaven as the rest of mankind, and have got good hearts at bottom." As to anyone feeling sure of heaven, or confident of his own salvation, they consider it quite abominable. "No man can be sure. We ought to *hope well* of all."

There are only too many people of this sort in the present day. Of course the doctrine of perseverance is intolerable to them. When a man refuses to allow that anyone is elect, or has grace, or enjoys any special mark of God's favor more than his neighbors—it stands to reason, that he will deny that anyone can have the grace of perseverance.

(3) I believe another common reason why many do not hold perseverance is an incorrect view of the nature of SAVING FAITH. They regard faith as nothing better than a feeling or impression. As soon as they see a man somewhat impressed with the preaching of the Gospel and manifesting some pleasure in hearing about Christ—they set him down at once as a believer! By and by the man's impressions wear away, and his interest about Christ and salvation ceases altogether. Where is the faith he seemed to have? It is gone. How can his friends, who have pronounced him a believer, account for it? They can only account for it by saying,

that "a man may fall away from faith," and that "there is no such thing as perseverance." And in short, this becomes an established principle in their religion.

Now this is a mischievous error, and I am afraid sadly common in many quarters. It manifestly may be traced to ignorance of the true nature of religious affections. People forget that there may be many religious emotions in the human mind—with which saving grace has nothing to do. The stony ground hearers received the word with joy—but had no root in them. The history of all revivals proves that there may often be a great quantity of *seemingly* religious impression, without any true work of the Spirit. Saving faith is something far deeper and mightier than a *little sudden feeling*. It is an act not of the *feelings* only—but of the whole conscience, will, understanding, and inward man. It is the result of clear knowledge. It springs from a conscience not *grazed* merely—but *thoroughly stirred*. It shows itself in a deliberate, willing, humble dependence on Christ. Such faith is the gift of God—and is *never* overthrown! Make faith a mere matter of *feeling*—and it is of course impossible to maintain perseverance for such a one.

(4) I believe another reason why many do not hold perseverance is near akin to the one last mentioned. It is an incorrect view of the nature of CONVERSION. Not a few are ready to pronounce *any change for the better* in a man's character, to be a conversion. They forget that there may be many *blossoms* on a tree in spring, and yet *no fruit* in autumn; and that a new coat of paint does not make an old door new. Some, if they see anyone *weeping* under the influence of a sermon, will set it down at once as a case of conversion. Others, if a neighbor suddenly gives up drinking or swearing, and become a great professor—at once rush to the conclusion that he is converted.

The natural consequence in numerous instances is disappointment. Their *supposed* case of conversion often turns out nothing more than a case of *outward reform*, in which the heart was never changed. Their converted neighbor sometimes returns to old habits—as the pig that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire. But then unhappily the pride of the natural heart, which never likes to allow itself mistaken, induces people to form a wrong conclusion about the case. Instead of telling us that the man *never* was converted at all, they say that "he was converted—but afterwards *lost his grace* and fell away."

The true remedy for this is a right understanding of conversion. It is no such cheap and easy and common thing as many seem to fancy. It is a mighty work on heart, which none but He who made the world can effect, and a work which will abide and stand the fire. But once take a low and superficial view of conversion, and you will find it impossible to maintain final perseverance.

(5) I believe another most common reason why many do not hold perseverance is an incorrect view of the effect of BAPTISM. They lay it down, as a cardinal point in their divinity, that all who are baptized are born again in baptism, and all receive the grace of the Holy Spirit. Without a single plain text in the Bible to support their opinions, they still tell us that all baptized people are necessarily regenerate. Of course such a view of baptism is utterly destructive of the doctrine that true grace can never be overthrown. It is plain as daylight that multitudes of baptized people never show a spark of grace all their lives, and never give the slightest evidence of having been born of God. They *live* careless and worldly—and careless and worldly they *die*—and to all appearance miserably perish. According to the view to which I am now referring, "they have all fallen away from grace! They have all had it! They were all made God's children! But they all lost their grace! They have all become children of the devil!" I will not trust myself to make a single remark on such doctrine. I leave those who can to reconcile it with the Bible. All I say is, that if baptismal regeneration be true, there is an end of the final perseverance.

(6) I believe another reason why many do not hold perseverance, is an incorrect view of the nature of the Church. They make no distinction between the *visible* Church which contains "evil as well as good," and the *invisible* Church which is composed of none but God's elect and true believers. They apply to the one the privileges, and blessings, and promises which belong to the other. They call the *visible* Church, with its crowds of ungodly members, and baptized infidels, "the mystical body of Christ, the Bride, the Lamb's wife, the Holy Catholic Church," and the like. They will not see what Hooker long ago pointed out, and his admirers would do well to remember—that all these glorious titles do not properly belong to any *visible* Church—but to the mystical company of God's elect. The consequence of all this confusion is certain and plain. Upon this man-made system they are obliged to allow that thousands of members of Christ's body have no life, no grace, and no sympathy with their Head, and end at last by being ruined forever, and becoming lost members of Christ in hell! Of course at this rate they cannot maintain the doctrine of perseverance. Once embrace the unscriptural notion that all members of the *visible* Church are, by virtue of their churchmanship, members of Christ, and the doctrine of this tract must be thrown aside.

Reader, I commend the things I have just been saying to your sincere and prayerful attention. I have gone through them at the risk of seeming wearisome, from a deep conviction of their great importance. I am sure if any of this tract deserves consideration, it is this.

I entreat you to observe how important it is for Christians to be sound in the faith, and to be armed with clear Scriptural knowledge of the whole system of the Gospel. I fear the increasing tendency to regard all doctrinal questions as *matters of opinion*; and to look on all earnest-minded men as right, whatever doctrines they maintain. I warn you that the sure result of giving way to this tendency will be a vague, low, misty theology—a theology containing no positive hope, no positive motive, and no positive consolation—a theology which will fail most, just when it is most needed—in the day of affliction, the hour of sickness, and on the bed of death.

I know well that it is a thankless office to offer such warnings as these. I know well that those who give them must expect to be called bigoted, narrow-minded, and exclusive. But I cannot review the many errors which prevail on the subject of perseverance, without seeing more than ever, the immense need there is for urging on all to be careful about doctrine. Oh, learn to know what you mean when you talk of believing the doctrines of Christianity! Be able to give a reason of your hope. Be able to say what you think is true, and what you think false in religion. And never, never forget that the only foundation of soundness in the faith, is a thorough textual knowledge of the Bible.

I entreat you, in the last place, to observe how one error in religion leads on to another. There is a close connection between false doctrines. It is almost impossible to take up one alone. Once let a man get wrong about the Church and the sacraments, and there is no saying how far he may go and where he may land at last. It is a mistake at the fountain-head and influences the whole course of his religion. The mistake about baptism is a striking illustration of what I mean. It throws a color over the whole of a man's divinity; it insensibly affects his views of justification, sanctification, election, and perseverance; it fills his mind with a tangled maze of confusion as to all the leading articles of the faith. He starts with a theory for which no single plain text of Scripture can be alleged,

and before this theory tramples plain passages of the Bible by the score! They interfere with his favorite theory, and therefore cannot mean what common sense tells us they do! Oh, reader, be as jealous about a little false doctrine, as you would be about a little sin! Remember the words of Paul: "a little leaven leavens the whole lump."

IV. I now proceed, in the last place, to mention some reasons why the doctrine of final perseverance is of great importance.

When I speak of the importance of perseverance, I do not for a moment mean that it is necessary to salvation to receive it. I freely grant that thousands and tens of thousands have gone to heaven, who believe all their lives that saints might fall away. But all this does not prove the doctrine maintained in this tract to be a matter of indifference. He who does not believe it and yet is saved, no doubt does well; but I am persuaded that he who believes it and is saved does far better. I hold it to be one of the chief privileges of the children of God, and I consider that no privilege contained in the Gospel can be lost sight of without injury to the soul.

(1) Perseverance is a doctrine of great importance, because of the strong color which it throws on the whole statement of the Gospel.

The grand characteristic of the Gospel is, that it is glad tidings. It is a message of peace to a rebellious world. It is good news from a far country, alike unexpected and undeserved. It is glad tidings—that there is a hope for us—lost, ruined, and bankrupt as we are by nature—a hope of pardon, a hope of reconciliation with God, a hope of glory. It is glad tidings—that the foundation of this hope is mighty, deep, and broad—that it is built on the atoning death and gracious mediation of a Savior. It is glad tidings—that this Savior is an actual living person, Jesus the Son of God; able to save to the uttermost all who come to God by Him—and no less merciful, compassionate, and ready to save than able. It is glad tidings—that the way to pardon and peace by this Savior is the *simplest* possible. It is not a thing high in Heaven that we cannot reach, or deep in the depths that we cannot fathom. It is simply to believe, to trust, and to cast ourselves wholly on Jesus for salvation, and salvation is all our own. It is glad tidings— that all who believe are at once justified and forgiven all things; their sins, however many—are washed away; their souls however unworthy—are counted righteous before God. They believe on Jesus, and therefore they are saved. This is the good news. This is the glad tidings. This is the truth which is the grand peculiarity of the Gospel. Happy indeed is he who knows and believes it!

But think, reader, for a moment, what a mighty difference it would make in the sound of the Gospel, if I went on to tell you—that after receiving all those mercies you might by-and-by lose them entirely! What would your feelings be if I told you that you were in daily peril of forfeiting all these privileges, and having your pardon sealed in Christ's blood taken back again? What would you think if I told you that your safety was yet an uncertain thing, and that you might yet perish and never reach Heaven at all? Oh, what a falling off this would seem! Oh, how much of the grace and beauty of the glorious Gospel would disappear and fade away! Yet this is literally and exactly the conclusion to which a denial of perseverance must bring us!

Once admit that the true saints of God may perish, and you seem to me to tear from the Gospel crown, its brightest jewel! We are hanging on the edge of precipice. We are kept in awful suspense until we are dead. To tell us that there are plenty of gracious promises to encourage us—if *we* will only persevere—is but mockery. It is like telling the sick man that if he will only get well—he will be strong. The poor patient feels no confidence that he will get well, and the poor weak believer feels nothing in him like power to persevere. Today he may be in *Canaan*, and tomorrow he may be in *Egypt* again, and in bondage! This week he may be in the narrow way which leads to life; but for anything he knows, next week he may be back in the broad road which leads to destruction! This month he may be a justified, pardoned, and forgiven man; but next month his pardon may be all revoked, and he himself in a state of condemnation! This year he may have faith, and be a child of God; next year he may be a child of the devil, and have no part or lot in Christ! Where is the good news in all this? What becomes of the glad tidings? Truly such doctrine seems to me to me—to cut up the joy of the Gospel by the roots. Yet this is the doctrine we must hold, if we reject the final perseverance of the saints.

I bless God that I am able to see another kind of Gospel than this in the word of God. To my eyes the Bible seems to teach that he who once truly begins the life of faith in Christ—shall without doubt be preserved from apostasy—and come to a glorious end. Once made alive by the grace of God—he shall live forever. Once raised from the grave of sin and made a new man—he shall never go back to the grave and become once more the old man dead in trespasses and sins. He shall be *kept* by the power of God. He shall be *more than conqueror* through Him that loved Him. The eternal God is his refuge; underneath him are Everlasting Arms.

The *love* in which he is interested is eternal. The *righteousness* in which he is clothed is eternal. The *redemption* which he enjoys is eternal. The sense and *comfort* of it he may lose by his own carelessness. But the thing itself, after once believing—is his for evermore.

Reader look at the two ways in which the weary and heavy-laden sinner may be addressed, and judge for yourself which is most like the gospel of the grace of God. On the side stands the doctrine, which says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ—and you shall be saved. Once truly believe—and you shall never perish. Your faith shall never be allowed entirely to fail. You shall be sealed by the Holy Spirit unto the day of redemption." On the other side stands the doctrine, which says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved. *But* after you have believed take care. Your faith may fail. You may fall away. You may drive the Spirit from you. You may at length perish everlastingly!" Which doctrine of these two contain most good news? Which is most like glad tidings? Is it all the same which way the sinner is addressed? Is it matter of indifference whether we tell him that believing he is saved, *unless* he falls away—or whether we tell him that believing he is saved forever? I cannot think it. I regard the difference between the two doctrines as very great indeed. It is the difference between January and June. It is the difference between midnight and noonday.

I speak for myself. I cannot answer for the experience of others. To give me *solid peace*, I must know something about my future prospects, as well as about my present position. It is pleasant to see my pardon today—but I cannot help thinking of tomorrow. Tell me that the Holy Spirit who leads me to Christ, and gives me repentance and faith in Him, will never leave me nor forsake me, and I feel solid comfort. My feet are on a rock. My soul is in safe hands. I shall get safely home. Tell me, on the other hand, that after being led to Christ by the Holy Spirit—that I am left to my own vigilance, and that it all depends on my watching, and praying, and care, whether the Spirit leaves me or not—and my heart melts within me. I stand on quicksand. I lean on a *broken reed*. I shall never get to heaven. It is vain to tell me of the promises; they are only mine *if I walk worthy* of them. It is vain to talk to me of Christ's mercy; I may lose all my interest in it by indolence and self-will. Reader, the absence of the doctrine of perseverance appears to me to give a different color to the whole Gospel. You cannot wonder if I regard it as of great importance.

(2) But the doctrine of perseverance is also of importance, because of the special influence it is calculated to have on all who halt between two opinions in religion.

There are many people of this description in the Church of Christ. There are hundreds to be found in every congregation to which the Gospel of Christ is preached, who know well what is right, and yet have not courage to act up to their knowledge. Their consciences are awakened. Their minds are comparatively enlightened. Their feelings are partially aroused to a sense of the value of their souls. They see the path they ought to take. They hope one day to be able to take it. But at present they sit still and wait. They will not take up the cross and confess Christ.

And what keeps them back? In a vast proportion of cases they are afraid to begin, lest they should by-and-by fail and fall away. They see innumerable difficulties before them if they serve Christ. They are quite right. It is vain to deny that there are difficulties, both many and great. They stand shivering on the brink of the vast sea on which we would have them embark, and as they mark the rolling, tumbling waves, their hearts faint. They mark many a little boat on the waters of that sea, tossed to and fro, and struggling hard to make its way across, and looking as if it would be engulfed in the angry billows, and never get safe to harbor. "It is of no use," they feel: "it is of no use. We shall certainly fall away. We cannot serve Christ yet. The thing cannot be done."

Now, what is most likely to give courage to these halting souls? What is most likely to hearten them for the voyage? What is most likely to cheer their spirits, nerve their minds, and bring them to the point of boldly launching away? — I answer, without hesitation, The doctrine of *final perseverance*.

I would gladly tell them that however great the difficulties of Christ's service, there is grace and strength in store to carry them triumphantly through all. I would tell them that these poor, praying, broken-spirited voyagers whom they watch and expect to see cast away, are all safe as if they were already in harbor. They have each a pilot on board, who will carry them safe through every storm. They are each joined to the everlasting God by a tie that can never be broken, and shall all appear at length safe at the right hand of their Lord. Yes—and I would gladly tell them that they too shall all make a glorious end—if they will only begin. I would have them know that, if they will only commit themselves to Christ, they shall never be cast away. They shall not be plucked away by Satan. They shall never be left to sink and come to shame. *Trials* they may have—but none that the Spirit will not give them power to endure. *Temptations* they may have—but none that the Spirit shall not enable them to resist. Only let them begin—and they shall be conquerors. But the great matter is to begin.

Reader, I believe firmly that one reason why so many wavering people hang back from making a decided profession, is the lack of encouragement which the doctrine of perseverance is intended to afford.

(3) The doctrine of perseverance is of importance because of the special influence it is calculated to have on the minds of true believers.

The number of true believers is at all times very small. They are a little flock. But even out of that flock there are a few who can be called strong in faith, few who know much of uninterrupted joy and peace in believing, few who are not often cast down by their doubts, anxieties, and fears.

It is useless to deny that the way to Heaven is narrow. There are many things to try the faith of believers. They have trials the world cannot understand. They have *within* a **heart** weak, deceitful, and not to be trusted; cold—when they desire to be warm; backward—when they would gladly to be forward; more ready to sleep than watch. They have *without* a **world** which does not love Christ's truth, and Christ's people—a world full of slander, ridicule, and persecution—a world with which their own dearest relations often join. They have ever *near* them a busy **devil**, an enemy who has been reading men's hearts for 6,000 years, and knows exactly how to suit and time his temptations—an enemy who never ceases to lay snares in their way—who never slumbers and never sleeps. They have the cares of life to attend to, like other people—the cares of children—the cares of business—the cares of servants—the cares of money—the cares of earthly plans and arrangements—the cares of a poor, weak body, each daily thrusting itself upon their souls. Who can wonder that believers are sometimes cast down? Who ought not rather to marvel that any believers are saved? Truly I often think that the salvation of each saved person is a greater miracle than the passage of Israel through the Red Sea.

But what is the best antidote against the believer's fears and anxieties? What is most likely to cheer him as he looks forward to the untried future and remembers the weary past? I answer without hesitation, the doctrine of the final perseverance of God's elect. Let him know that God having begun a good work in him will never allow it to be overthrown. Let him know that the *footsteps* of Christ's little flock are all in one direction. They have erred. They have been vexed. They have been tempted. But not one of them has been lost. Let him know that those whom Jesus loves, He loves unto the end. Let him know that He will not allow the weakest lamb in His flock to perish in the wilderness, or the tenderest flower in His garden to wither and die. Let him know that Daniel in the den of lions, the three children in a fiery furnace, Paul in the shipwreck, Noah in the ark—were none of them more cared for and more secure, than the believer in Christ. Let him know that he is fenced, walled, protected, guarded by the Almighty power of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and cannot perish. Let him know that it is not in the power of the things in the present or things to come—of men or of devils—of cares within or troubles without, to separate one single child of God from the love that is in Christ Jesus.

This is strong consolation. These are the things which God has laid up in the Gospel for the establishment and confirmation of His people. Well would it be for His people if these things were more brought forward than they are in the Church of Christ. Truly I believe that one reason of the saints' weakness is their ignorance of the truths which God has revealed in order to make them strong.

Reader, I leave the subject of the *importance of perseverance* here. I trust I have said enough to show you that I have not called your attention to it in this tract without good cause. I feel strongly that the hardness of man's heart is such that nothing should be omitted in religious teaching which is likely to do it good. I dare not omit a single grain of truth, however strong and liable to abuse it may seem to be. Nothing appears to me of small importance which adds to the beauty of the Gospel, or gives encouragement to the halting, or confirms and builds up God's people. I desire to teach that the Gospel not only offers present pardon and peace—but *eternal safety* and *certain continuance* to the end. This I believe be the mind of the Spirit. And what the Spirit reveals—I desire to proclaim.

And now, reader, I have brought before you, to the best of my ability, the whole subject of perseverance. I have told you as plainly as

I can, what I believe to be the truth as it is in Jesus. If I have offended you by anything I have said, I am sorry. I have no desire to pain anyone, and least of all the children of God. If I have failed to convince you I am sorry—but I am satisfied the defect is not in the doctrine I defend—but in my manner of stating it. It only remains to *conclude* this tract by a few words of **PRACTICAL APPLICATION**.

(1) For one thing, let me entreat you to consider well, whether you have any part at all in the salvation of Christ Jesus.

It matters nothing what you believe about perseverance, if after all you have no faith in Christ. It matters little whether you hold the doctrine or not, so long as you have no saving faith, and your sins are not forgiven, and your heart not renewed by the Holy Spirit. The clearest head-knowledge will save no man. The most correct and orthodox views will not prevent a man from perishing by the side of the most ignorant heathen—if he is not born again. Oh, search and see what is the state of your own soul!

You cannot live forever. You must one day die. You cannot avoid the judgment after death. You must stand before the bar of Christ. The summons of the Archangel cannot be disobeyed. The last great assembly must be attended. The state of your own soul must one day undergo a thorough investigation. It will be found out one day what you are in God's sight. Your spiritual condition will at length be brought to light before the whole world. Oh, find out what it is now! While you have time, while you have health, find out the state of your soul.

Your danger, if you are not converted, is far greater than I can describe. Just in proportion to the thorough safety of the believer—is the deadly peril of the unbeliever! There is but a step between the unbeliever and the worm which never dies, and the fire which is never quenched. He is literally hanging over the brink of the bottomless pit! **Sudden death to the saint—is sudden glory! Sudden death to the unbeliever—is sudden hell!** Oh, search and see what is the state of your soul! "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him." John 3:36

Remember that you may find out whether you have an interest in the invitations of the Gospel. It is a thing that may be known. It is nonsense to pretend that no man can tell. I never will believe that an honest man, with a Bible in his hand, will fail to discern his spiritual condition by diligent self-examination. Oh be a honest man! Search the Scriptures. Look within. Rest not until you find out the state of your soul. To live on and leave the soul's state uncertain, is not to play the part of a wise man—but a fool.

(2) In the next place, if you know nothing of the privileges of the Gospel, I entreat you this day to repent and be converted, to hear Christ's voice, and follow Him.

I know no reason, human or divine, why you should not accept this invitation today and be saved, if you are really willing. It is not the quantity of your sins that need prevent you. All manner of sin may be forgiven. The blood of Jesus cleanses away all sin. It is not the hardness of your heart that need prevent you. A new heart God will give you, and a new spirit will He put in you. It is not the decrees of God that need prevent you. He wills not the death of sinners. He is not willing that any should perish—but that all should come to repentance. It is not any lack of willingness in Christ—He has long cried to the sons of men, "Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely." "Him that comes unto Me I will never cast out." Oh, reader, why should not you be saved?

A day must come, if you are ever to be God's child, when will you cease to trifle with your soul's interests. An hour must come when at last you will bend your knee in real earnestness, and pour out of your heart before God in real prayer. A time must come when the burden of your sins will at last feel intolerable, and when you will feel you must have rest in Christ or perish. All this must be if you are ever to become a child of God and be saved. And why not today? Why not this very night? Why not without delay seek Christ and live? Oh, reader, answer me, if you can!

(3) In the next place, let me entreat every reader who holds final perseverance, so to use this precious doctrine as not to abuse it.

There is an awful readiness in all men to *abuse God's mercies*. Even the children of God are not as free from the sad infection. There is a busy devil near the best of saints, who would gladly persuade them to make their privileges a plea for the careless living, and to turn their soul's food into poison. I cannot look around the church and the end to which many high professors come, without feeling that there is need for caution. "Let him that thinks he stands—take heed lest he fall."

Would we know what it is to *abuse the doctrine of perseverance?* It is abused when believers make their *safety* a n excuse for inconsistencies in practice. It is abused when they make their *security from final ruin* an apology for a low standard of sanctification, and a distant walk with God. Against both those abuses I entreat believers to be on their guard.

Would we know what it is to *use the doctrine of perseverance aright?* Let us watch jealously over the daily workings of our own hearts. Let us mortify and nip in the bud, the least inclination to spiritual indolence. Let us settle down in our minds as a ruling principle of our lives, that the mercies of God are only turned to a good account when they have a sanctifying effect on our hearts. Let us root it finally in our inward man, that the love of Christ is never so really valued—as when it constrains us to increased spiritual-mindedness. Let us set before our minds, that the more *safe* we feel—the more holy we ought to be. The more we realize that God has done much for us—the more we ought to do for God. The greater our debt—the greater should be our gratitude. The more we see the riches of grace—the more rich should we be in good works.

Oh, for a heart like that of the Apostle Paul! To realize like he did, our perfect safety in Christ—to labor as he did for God's glory, as if we could never do too much—this is the mark—this is the standard at which we ought to aim.

Reader, let us so use the doctrine of perseverance, that our good may never be evil spoken of. Let us so adorn the doctrine by our lives, that we may make it beautiful to others, and constrain men to say, "It is a good and holy thing to be persuaded that the saints will never perish."

(4) In the last place, I entreat all believers who have hitherto been afraid of falling away, to lay firm hold on the doctrine of perseverance, and to realize their own safety in Christ.

I want you to know the length and breadth of your portion in Christ. I want you to understand the full amount of treasure to which faith in Jesus entitles you. You have found out that you are a great sinner. Thank God for that. You have fled to Christ for pardon and peace with God. Thank God for that. You have committed yourself to Jesus for time and eternity. Thank God for that. You have no hope but in Christ's blood, Christ's righteousness, Christ's mediation, Christ's daily all-persevering intercession. Thank God for that. Your heart's desire and prayer is to be holy in all of life. Thank God for that. But oh, lay hold upon the glorious truth—that believing on Jesus you shall never perish, you shall never be cast away, you shall never fall away! It is written for you as well as the apostles, "My sheep shall never perish." Yes! reader, Jesus has spoken it—and Jesus meant it to be believed. Jesus has spoken it—who never broke His promises. Jesus has spoken it—who cannot lie. Jesus has spoken it—who has power in heaven and earth to keep His word. Jesus has spoken it for the least and lowest believers: "My sheep shall never perish."

Would you have perfect peace in life? Then lay hold on this doctrine of perseverance. Your *trials* may be many and great. Your *cross* may be very heavy. But the business of your soul is all conducted according to an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure. All things are working together for your good. Your *sorrows* are only purifying your soul for glory; your *bereavements* are only fashioning you as a polished stone for the temple above, made without hands. From whatever quarter the *storms* blow, they only drive you nearer to heaven! Whatever weather you may go through it is only ripening you for the garner of God. Your best things are quite safe. Come what will, you shall "never perish."

Would you have strong consolation in *sickness*? Then lay hold on this doctrine of perseverance. Think, as you feel the pins of this earthly tabernacle loosening one by one, "nothing can break my union with Christ!" Your body may become useless; your members may refuse to perform their duty; you may feel like an old useless log—a weariness to others, and a burden to yourself. But your soul is safe! Jesus is never tired of caring for your soul. You shall "never perish."

Would you have full assurance of hope in *death*? Then lay hold on this doctrine of perseverance. Doctors may have given over their labors; friends may be unable to minister to your needs; sight may depart; hearing may depart; memory may be almost gone—but the loving kindness of God shall not depart. Once in Christ you shall never be forsaken. Jesus shall stand by you. Death shall not separate you from the everlasting love of God in Christ. You shall "never perish."

Reader, may this be your portion in life and death! And may it be mine!

The Way of Salvation

by J. C. Ryle

Where must a man go for pardon? Where is forgiveness to be found? There is a way both sure and plain, and into that way I desire to guide every inquirers feet. That way is simply to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior. It is to cast your soul with all its sins, unreservedly on Christ—to cease completely from any dependence on your own works or doings, either in whole or in part—and to rest on no other work but Christ's work—no other righteousness but Christ's righteousness, no other merit but Christ's merit as your ground of hope. Take this course—and you are a pardoned soul.

Says Peter "All the prophets testify about Him, that through His name everyone who believes in Him will receive forgiveness of sins." (Acts 10:43). Says Paul at Antioch, "Through this Man forgiveness of sins is being proclaimed to you, and everyone who believes in Him is justified from everything." (Acts 13:38). "In Him," writes Paul to the Colossians, "we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins" (Col. 1:14).

The Lord Jesus Christ, in great love and compassion has made a full and complete satisfaction for sin, by suffering death in our place upon the cross. There He offered Himself as a sacrifice for us, and allowed the wrath of God which we deserved—to fall on His own head! For our sins, as our Substitute, He gave Himself, suffered, and died—the just for the unjust, the innocent for the guilty—that He might deliver us from the curse of a broken law, and provide a complete pardon for all who are willing to receive it. And by so doing, as Isaiah says—He has borne our sins. As John the Baptist says—He has taken away sin. As Paul says—He has purged our sins, and put away sin. As Daniel says—He has made an end of sin and finished transgression.

And now the Lord Jesus Christ is sealed and appointed by God the Father to be a Prince and a Savior, to give forgiveness of sins, to all who will have it. The keys of death and hell are put in His hand. The government of the *gate of heaven* is laid on His shoulder. He Himself is the door, and by Him all who enter in shall be saved. Christ, in one word, has purchased a full forgiveness, if we are only willing to receive it. He has done all, paid all, suffered all that was needful, to reconcile us to God. He has provided a *garment of righteousness* to clothe us. He has opened a *fountain of living waters* to cleanse us. He has removed every barrier between us and God the Father, taken every obstacle out of the way—and made a road by which the vilest may return to God. All things are now ready, and the sinner has only to believe and be saved, to eat and be satisfied, to ask and receive, to wash and be clean.

Faith, or simple trust is the only thing required, in order that you and I may be forgiven. That we will come by faith to Jesus as sinners with our sins—trust in Him—and forsaking all other hope, cleave only to Him—that is all and everything that God asks for. Let a man only do this, and he shall be saved. His iniquities shall be found completely pardoned, and his transgressions completely taken away!

Who, among all the readers of this paper, desires to be saved by Christ, and yet is not saved at present? Come, I beseech you! Come to Christ without delay. Though you have been a great sinner, COME! Though you have long resisted warnings, counsels, sermons, COME! Though you have sinned against light and knowledge, against a father's advice and a mother's tears, COME! Though you

have plunged into every excess of wickedness, and lived without prayer, yet COME! The door is not shut, the fountain is not yet closed. Jesus Christ invites you. It is enough that you feel laboring and heavy-laden, and desire to be saved. COME! COME TO CHRIST WITHOUT DELAY! Come to Him by faith, and pour out your heart before Him in prayer. Tell Him the whole story of your life, and ask Him to receive you. Cry to Him as the penitent thief did, when He saw Him on the cross. Say to Him, "Lord save me also! Lord remember me!" COME! COME TO CHRIST

The Privileges of the True Christian

J. C. Ryle

"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give eternal life to them. They will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all. No one is able to snatch them out of my Father's hand." (John 10:27-29)

About the first part of this text, beloved, I spoke to you this morning. I told you then that this passage contains two things—first the character of true Christians, and secondly their privileges—first what they are to their Savior, and secondly what their Savior is to them.

Let me, then, remind you what the text says of their character. "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me." (John 10:27)

1. God's children, His real believing people, are compared to **sheep**, because they are gentle, quiet, harmless and inoffensive; because they are useful and do good to all around them; because they love to be together, and dislike separation; and lastly because they are very helpless and wandering and liable to stray.

2. Jesus calls them "**My sheep**," as if they were His peculiar property. "Mine," He would have us know, by election, "Mine" by purchase, and "Mine" by adoption.

3. Christ's sheep hear His voice, they listen humbly to His teaching, they take His word for their rule and guide.

4. Christ's sheep follow Him, they walk in the narrow path He has marked out, they do not refuse because it is sometimes steep and narrow--but wherever the line of duty lies they go forward without doubting.

It only remains for us now to consider the other part of my text, which respects the *blessings* and *privileges* which Jesus the Good Shepherd bestows upon His people. The Lord grant that none of you may take to yourselves promises which do not belong to you—that none may take liberty from God's exceeding mercy to continue sleeping in sin. Glorious and comfortable things are written in this passage—but remember they are given to Christ's flock only; I fence it out against all that are unbelieving and impenitent and profane. I warn you plainly, except you will hear the voice of Christ and follow Him, you have no right or portion in this blessed fountain of consolations.

Hear now what Jesus says of His believing people: "I know them. . . . I give unto them eternal life; they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand."

Before we look into the meaning of these words more closely, I wish to answer two questions which may arise in the minds of some before me. **Of whom is the Lord Jesus speaking?** Are we to suppose He only has in view patriarchs and prophets and apostles—men like Abraham and David and Job and Daniel, men who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, worked signs and miracles, and shed their blood for the kingdom of God's sake? Are these the sort of people who alone can take comfort from those blessed words, "I know them . . . . they shall never perish." Is everyone else to go on doubting to his life's end? God forbid that I should tell you so! it were doing Satan's work to preach such doctrine. This text may become the property of the worst of sinners—if he will only hear Christ's voice and follow Him.

Scribes and Pharisees, Sadducees and Herodians, tax collectors and harlots, drunkards and fornicators, murderers, thieves and adulterers, liars and blasphemers. worldly-minded and covetous ones—all and each of them may lay firm hold on this text, and inherit its precious treasures—if they will only hear Christ's voice and follow Him. It is for all who repent and believe the Gospel; it is for all who mourn over their past sins with a true godly sorrow, and flee to the Lord Jesus Christ with faith and prayer as their only hope, their all-sufficient Savior, their all in all. There is not one single man or woman of whom it shall not be written in the Lamb's book of life, "This is one known of God, this is an heir of eternal life, this is a man or a woman that is never to perish, never to be plucked out of the Lord's hand," if you will only give up your sins and take Christ Jesus for your Shepherd and Redeemer. Your repentance may seem very faint, your faith may appear weak as water—but if there be so much as a grain of mustard seed, if there be enough to lead you a penitent to the foot of the cross, you shall find yourself one day numbered with the saints in glory everlasting.

The other question I wish to answer is this: **why did the Lord Jesus Christ give us this full and complete promise?** Because He knew that true Christians would always be a very doubting, fearful, faint-hearted generation, always ready to believe they shall not be saved, always afraid they shall never see the New Jerusalem, because of the inbred corruption which they find continually in their hearts. He saw they would require the strong wine of assurance like this, and so He has provided this and like texts, as a reviving cordial to cheer and enliven their hearts, whenever they feel desponding and feeble-minded and ready to halt, in their pilgrimage through this weary world.

We will now look narrowly into the parts of this promise.

I. First, says the Lord Jesus Christ of His sheep who hear His voice and follow Him, **"I know them."** I know their number, their names, their particular characters, their besetting sins, their troubles, their trials, their temptations, their doubts, their prayers, their private meditations; I know everything about everyone of them. Think what a comfortable saying that is! The *world* knows nothing about Christ's sheep; to be sure, the world remarks there are a few people, here one and there one, who live differently to others, who seem to be more serious in their deportment, who appear to be taken up with some important consideration or other—but the world only wonders they can be so particular about little sins, and when their ways run counter to the world, the world is vastly offended. But as for their fear of sin, and their carefulness about souls, the world neither knows nor understands what they are about; the secret springs of their conduct are all hidden.

Again, a Christian's *friends* do often know him not. They may possibly respect him and allow him to hold on his way unopposed—though this, alas! is not always the case—but as for his pleasures and his pains, his constant warfare with the flesh, the world and the devil, his dread of falling into temptation, his delight in all means of grace, they can neither explain nor comprehend it; there is a something hidden in his character of which they know nothing.

Be comforted, all you who are tried and buffeted with difficulties in your way towards heaven, difficulties from without and difficulties from within, difficulties abroad and difficulties at home, grief for your own sins and grief for the sins of others: the Good Shepherd Jesus knows you well, though you may not think it. You never shed a secret tear over your own corruption, you never breathed a single prayer for forgiveness and helping grace, you never made a single struggle against wickedness, which He did not remark and note down in the book of His remembrance. You need not fear His not understanding your needs, you need not be afraid your prayers are too poor and unlearned to be attended to; He knows your particular necessities far better than you do yourselves, and your humble supplications are no sooner offered up than heard. You may sometimes sigh and mourn for lack of Christian fellowship, you may sometimes lament that you have not more around you with whom you might take sweet converse about salvation—but remember there is a Good Shepherd, who is ever about your path and about your bed, His eyes are on all your movements, and no husband, brother, father, mother, sister, friend, could take more tender interest in your soul's welfare than He does. If you transgress He will grieve—but He will chasten and bring you back; if you bear good fruit, He will rejoice and give more grace; if you sorrow He will bind up your broken heart and pour in balm; He is ever watching and observing and listening; no believer is so humble and lowly, but He is acquainted with all their ways.

And does not Jesus know the men of this world, the faithless and ungodly? Unquestionably He does. He knows their proceedings; there is not a single sin they have committed but will appear written down in full in the great book—but He only knows them as His enemies—as careless, thoughtless ones, who will not take the trouble to hear His voice and follow Him—and in the last day, when all shall stand before Him, He will say, "I know you not: you would not seek to know me on earth, and I know nothing of you in heaven; depart, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." No doubt there will be many a Balaam there, many a barren fig-tree, many a foolish virgin, many a fruitless vine, many a loud-talking hypocrite, who will say, "Lord, Lord, open to us! Have we not taught in Your name, and in Your name quoted many texts, and in Your name made a great profession?" but still the answer will be, "I never knew you . . . depart from Me, you who work iniquity."

Oh, what a blessed and comfortable thing to be known by Christ, known and marked as His friends, His relations, His dear children, His beloved family, His purchased possession! Here we are often cast down, often discouraged, often persecuted, often spoken against, often misunderstood—but let us take courage, our Lord and Master knows all. A day shall come when we shall no longer see through a glass darkly—but face to face—a day when we shall know even as we are now known; for the union between us and our Redeemer, which we so often feel disposed to doubt, shall then be clearly seen, and we shall no more go out to battle.

II. What is the next part of my text? The Lord Jesus says of His sheep, "**I give unto them eternal life!**" What is the portion which Jesus gives His people? "eternal life"—a perfect, never-ending happiness for that which is the most important part of a man—his immortal soul. They shall not be hurt by the second death, which alone is to be really feared. What greater things could our Lord bestow upon His people? Health and riches and honor and pleasures, houses and lands, and wives and children—what are they? how long do they last?—it is but threescore years and ten, and we must leave them all—and six feet of vile earth is room enough for us. Naked came we into the world, and naked must we return unto the dust, and carry nothing with us. What is the difference between the rich and the poor in death? They both go unto one and the same place; the worm feeds sweetly on them both; it is but a short time, and you would not be able to distinguish between their bones.

But if the poor man sleeps in Jesus, while the rich man dies in his sins, oh, what a mighty gulf then is between them! The rich will take up his abode in that fire which is never quenched; the poor will awake to find he has an everlasting treasure in heaven, even eternal life. Eternal life! compared to which this world's concerns, weighty and important as they seem, are like a drop of water. Amazing indeed that men should trouble themselves about the things of earth, and sweat and toil after a little more gold and silver, and spend their strength upon these frail, sickly bodies of ours, to get enjoyment for them, and yet remain careless and dead and frozen about the life of that precious talent the soul!

But about eternal life? "I," says the Lord Jesus Christ, "do give it to my people." Who says this? He says it who bought and paid the full price; He who has in His hands the keys of death and hell; He who opens and no man shuts, He who shuts and no man opens; He says it who is the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, who is not a man that He should lie, who never breaks His promise; He says it who has a right to say it, for He came down to do His Father's will and die in our stead to obtain redemption for us, and when He declares "I give eternal life," death and hell must be silent, none can gainsay Him.

"I give," He declares, "eternal life." He does not speak after the fashion of the world; this world is cold, and calculating and heartless; there is little giving—it is all bargaining and selling and paying what is the value of things. Blessed be God, the Lord Jesus does not deal with sinners as they deal with each other. He gives eternal life *freely*, and of grace, and for nothing, without money and without price. He does not give it because we are worthy or deserving, nor yet because we shall show ourselves worthy and deserving—but He gives it as a free gift, because He loves us and has set His affection upon us.

Consider with yourselves how glorious that doctrine is; how thoroughly it takes away all excuse from the impenitent. Pardon and

forgiveness are here unconditionally bestowed; we are not told that we must pay off so much every day, and then shall be saved—that would drive us to doubt and despair—but if a man will only hear Christ's voice and follow Him, "Behold "says Jesus, "I give unto him eternal life, there remains no condemnation for him."

III. The third promise in my text is as follows: Jesus says of His sheep, "**They shall never perish**!" They shall never be finally cast away, if they have once been sealed and numbered in my flock. They may have many a slip and many a fall, they may experience many a shortcoming and many a backsliding—but they shall never be lost eternally, they shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. Where are those fearful Christians, who think they may be Christ's sheep and yet come short at last? behold the assurance of Him who cannot lie, "they shall never perish!"

Yes! true Christians shall never perish! Is not that great work begun within their hearts by the Holy Spirit? has not the power of God Himself been employed in converting them from darkness to light? and shall we dare say that God will take in hand the smallest thing, and yet leave it unfinished and not bring it to perfection? Have they not been born again of incorruptible seed, and shall this seed be choked and bear no fruit? Have they not been made by grace new creatures, and is it possible that grace can have raised them to newness of life in vain? Where in the whole world can you find a work which the Lord has attempted, and yet been obliged to give up and leave all incomplete? Then far be it from us to suppose that a true believer can ever be cast away! If man had any share in his conversion one might reasonably doubt—but it is not so, it is the work of God, and what He does shall always be brought to perfection. The building which the Holy Spirit has founded shall never be allowed to decay, it shall never be left half finished, and the top-stone shall certainly be one day laid on with shouting.

True Christians shall never perish. Are they not Christ's special property, the servants of His house, the members of His family, the children of His adoption? Then surely He will never let them be overthrown, He will watch them as tenderly as we watch over our own flesh and blood, He will guard them as we guard our valuable and precious possessions, He will cherish them as we cherish that which is most dear to our hearts; He never would have laid down His life for their sakes if He had intended to give them up.

"Never perish!" Kings of the earth and mighty men shall depart and be no more seen; thrones and dominions and principalities, rich men and honorable men shall be swept into the tomb—but the humblest Christian cottager shall never see death everlasting, and when the heavens shall pass away as a scroll, and earth shall be burned up, that man shall be found to have a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. That man may be poor in this world and lightly esteemed—but I see in him one who shall be a glorious saint, when those who perchance had more of this life's good things shall be in torment; I am confident that nothing shall ever separate him from the love of Christ. He may have his doubts—but I know he is provided for, he shall never be lost.

IV. There remains one thing more. Jesus adds, "**Neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand**." There is assurance upon assurance, that none may have an excuse for doubting. There is always something plucking at Christ's sheep: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life, the devil, and the world are ever striving hard to destroy them—but they shall not succeed! Do you think the devil will give up his kingdom without a mighty struggle? Oh no, he goes about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour; he wars a constant warfare with all who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ—but the word of God is pledged that he shall never prevail. Not all the powers of darkness shall avail to quench one single spark of real gospel faith.

And now, beloved, in **CONCLUSION**, let me speak a word of exhortation to all among you who hear Christ's voice and follow Him. O that the Spirit may come down among you, and add to your number a hundredfold! Are you indeed Christ's sheep? Can you feel within yourselves the working of His blessed Spirit, mortifying the works of the flesh, and drawing up your minds to heavenly things? Have you the witness in yourselves that you have gone through a real spiritual change, that you hate the sins which once you loved, and love the things which once you despised? Have you good reason to believe that you have indeed put off the old man with his deeds, and put on the new man with the lamb-like nature of your blessed Master? Then, oh, rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory! Pray that you may not stand still—but go on from grace to grace and strength to strength; pray that you may bear much spiritual fruit, for thus is your Father glorified, and then will you make your own calling and election sure to yourselves.

Are you indeed Christ's sheep? *Then beware of ever trusting to yourselves;* nothing offends the Good Shepherd more than to see the members of His flock, forgetting that in Him alone is all their safety, and glorying in their own attainments and performances. Think not of your weak endeavors; think not to say, "I do very little, and therefore have very little hope—by-and-by I trust I shall do much, and then I shall have much hope"; your best performances and attempts towards heaven are in themselves but broken reeds, and can bear no weight; they are precious as evidences of spiritual life—but they cannot justify. Think only of your Savior Jesus Christ, trust Him entirely, love Him affectionately, look to Him continually. As long as you lean on Him you are strong and none can touch you. Without Him and in your own might, you are weak and unstable as water.

Are you indeed Christ's sheep? *Then beware of wandering from the pasture He has provided.* The devil and the old Adam would often persuade you there is no need for this diligence in using means of grace: "Surely," they will say, "you are not such a babe but you can leave these fields for a short season; surely you need not keep so closely in your Shepherd's sight." Christian, take heed and beware of the charmer, charm he ever so wisely. Diligent private prayer, diligent Scripture searching, diligent gospel hearing—these are the pastures in which Jesus feeds His flock, and if you turn aside, if you become slack in using them, be sure your soul will soon starve for lack of its accustomed nourishment, and you will return to the fold weak and lame and lean and diseased.

Once more, and I have done. Are you indeed Christ's sheep? *then be sure you will have many a trial;* where indeed would be the value of a Savior, if there were not enemies to be saved from? Yes! you will have many a trial! **Satan** has great wrath against all who have escaped his snares, and he will bring every weapon to bear against your peace; he will start many a doubt within your mind, he will stir up many a vile and blasphemous imagination within the chambers of your heart, many a horrid thought you once would have believed impossible—but still remember those words, "never perish." Yes! you will have many a trial!

When did the ungodly **world** ever patronise and encourage a true Christian? Oh no, the world will mock and despise, and laugh and frighten, and misrepresent you, and spread false reports, and throw traps in your way, and if it dares it will persecute you.

And then there is the **flesh**, sleepy and drowsy and fond of excuses, always trying to make you believe you have more difficulties than

anybody else, deceitful, treacherous, needing constant watchfulness—but still the world and the flesh can never turn you back, except you are a graceless traitor. Remember those blessed words "never perish." Christian, you may be perplexed—but you never need despair; you may be persecuted but you are not forsaken, cast down but not destroyed; you may have tribulation—but you shall not have condemnation; you shall be saved from your enemies and from the hand of all who hate you. Fear none of these things which you shall suffer; be faithful unto death, and your Good Shepherd shall give you a crown of life.

Verily He is gone before to prepare a place for those whom He knows, and where He is in glory there they shall be also. "What then shall we say about these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who didn't spare his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how would he not also with him freely give us all things? Who could bring a charge against God's chosen ones? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, yes rather, who was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Could oppression, or anguish, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Even as it is written, "For your sake we are killed all day long. We were accounted as sheep for the slaughter." No, in all these things, we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing—will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:31-39)

Wheat or Chaff?

by J. C. Ryle

"His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly cleanse His threshing floor. He will gather His **wheat** into the barn, but the **chaff** He will burn up with unquenchable fire!" (Matthew 3:12)

You see a question at the head of this page. For whom do you think it is meant? Is it for corn merchants and farmers only, and for none else? If you think so you are much mistaken. It is meant for every man, woman, and child in the world. And among others, it is meant for you.

The question is drawn from a verse of Scripture which is now before your eyes. The words of that verse were spoken by John the Baptist. They are a prophecy about our Lord Jesus Christ, and a prophecy which has not yet been fulfilled. They are a prophecy which we shall all see fulfilled one day, and God alone knows how soon.

Reader, I invite you this day to consider the great truths which this verse contains. I invite you to listen to me, while I unfold them and set them before you in order. Who knows but this text may prove a word in season to your soul! Who knows but my question may help to make this day the happiest day in your life! Listen, before you begin once more your appointed path of duty. Listen, before you start once more on some round of business. Listen, before you plunge once more into some course of useless idleness and folly. Listen to one who loves your soul, and would sincerely help to save it, or draw it nearer to Christ. Who knows what a day may bring forth! Who can tell whether you will live to see tomorrow! Be still, and listen to me a few minutes, while I show you something out of the Word of God.

I. Let me show you in the first place, ***the two great classes into which the world may be divided.***

There are only two classes of people in the world, in the sight of God, and both are mentioned in the text which begins this tract. There are those who are called *the wheat*, and there are those who are called *the chaff*.

Viewed with the eye of man, the earth contains many different sorts of inhabitants. Viewed with the eye of God, it only contains two. Man's eye looks at the outward appearance—this is all he thinks of. The eye of God looks at the heart—this is the only part of which He takes any account. And tried by the state of their hearts, there are but two classes into which people can be divided—either they are wheat or they are chaff.

Reader, **who are the WHEAT** in the world? Listen to me, and I will tell you.

The wheat means all men and women who are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ—all who are led by the Holy Spirit—all who have felt themselves sinners, and fled for refuge to the salvation offered in the Gospel—all who love the Lord Jesus, and live to the Lord Jesus, and serve the Lord Jesus—all who have taken Christ for their only confidence, and the Bible for their only guide, and regard sin as their deadliest enemy, and look to heaven as their only home. All such, of every church, name, nation, people, and tongue—of every rank, station, condition, and degree—all such are God's wheat.

Show me men of this kind anywhere, and I know what they are. I know not that they and I may agree in all particulars—but I see in them the handiwork of the King of kings, and I ask no more. I know not whence they came, and where they found their religion—but I know where they are going, and that is enough for me. They are the children of my Father in heaven. They are part of His wheat.

All such, though sinful, and vile, and unworthy in their own eyes, are the precious part of mankind. They are the sons and daughters of God the Father. They are the delight of God the Son. They are the habitation of God the Spirit. The Father beholds no iniquity in them—they are the members of His dear Son's body—in Him He sees them, and is well pleased. The Lord Jesus discerns in them the fruit of His own travail and work upon the cross, and is well satisfied. The Holy Spirit regards them as spiritual temples which He Himself has raised, and rejoices over them. In a word, they are the wheat of the earth.

Reader, **who are the CHAFF** in the world? Listen to me once more, and I will tell you this also.

The chaff means all men and women who have no saving faith in Christ, and no sanctification of the Spirit, whoever they may be. Some of them perhaps are infidels, and some are formal Christians. Some are sneering Sadducees, and some self-righteous Pharisees. Some of them make a point of keeping up a kind of 'Sunday religion', and others are utterly careless of everything except their own

pleasure and the world. But all alike, who have the two great marks already mentioned—*no faith and no sanctification*—all such are chaff. From Paine and Voltaire to the dead churchman who can think of nothing but outward ceremonies—from Julian and Porphyry to the unconverted admirer of sermons in the present day—all, all are standing in one rank before God all, all are chaff.

They bring no glory to God the Father. They honor not the Son, and so do not honor the Father that sent Him. They neglect that mighty salvation, which countless millions of angels admire. They disobey that Word which was graciously written for their learning. They listen not to the voice of Him who condescended to leave heaven and die for their sins. They pay no tribute of service and affection to Him who gave them life, and breath, and all things. And therefore God takes no pleasure in them. He pities them—but He reckons them no better than chaff.

Yes—you may have rare intellectual gifts, and high mental attainments—you may sway kingdoms by your counsel, move millions by your pen, or keep crowds in breathless attention by your tongue—but if you have never submitted yourself to the yoke of Christ, and never honored His Gospel by heartfelt reception of it, you are nothing but chaff in His sight. Natural gifts without saving grace, are like a row of ciphers without an unit before them—they look big—but they are of no value. The meanest insect that crawls is a nobler being than you are. It fills its place in creation, and glorifies its Maker with all its power—and you do not. You do not honor God with heart, and will, and intellect, and members, which are all His. You invert His order and arrangement, and live as if time was of more importance than eternity, and body better than soul. You dare to neglect God's greatest gift, His own incarnate Son. You are cold about that subject which fills all heaven with hallelujahs. And so long as this is the case, you belong to the worthless part of mankind. You are the chaff of the earth.

Reader, let this thought be deeply engraved in your mind, whatever else you forget in this volume. Remember there are only two kinds of people in the world. There are wheat, and there are chaff.

There are many **nations** in Europe. Each differs from the rest. Each has its own language, its own laws, its own peculiar customs. But God's eye divides Europe into two great parties—the wheat and the chaff.

There are many **classes** in England. There are nobles and commoners—farmers and shopkeepers—masters and servants—rich and poor. But God's eye only takes account of two orders—the wheat and the chaff.

There are many and various **minds** in every congregation that meets for religious worship. There are some who attend for a mere form—and some who really desire to meet Christ; some who come there to please others—and some who come to please God; some who bring their hearts with them, and are not soon tired—and some who leave their hearts behind them, and reckon the whole service weary work. But the eye of Jesus only sees two divisions in the congregation—the wheat and the chaff.

There were millions of visitors to the Great Exhibition of 1851. From Europe, Asia, Africa, and America—from North, and South, and East, and West—crowds came together to see what human skill and industry could do. Children of our first father Adam's family, who had never seen each other before, for once met face to face under one roof. But the eye of the Lord only saw two companies thronging that large palace of glass—the wheat and the chaff.

Reader, I know well the world dislikes this way of dividing professing Christians. The world tries hard to fancy there are *three* sorts of people, and not *two*. To be very godly and very strict does not suit the world—they cannot, will not be holy. To have no religion at all does not suit the world—as that would not be respectable. "Thank God," they will say, "we are not so bad as that." But to have religion enough to be saved, and yet not go into extremes, to be sufficiently good, and yet not be peculiar—to have a quiet, easy-going, moderate kind of Christianity, and go comfortably to heaven after all—this is the world's favorite idea. There is a third class, a safe middle class—the world fancies; and in this middle class the majority of men persuade themselves they will be found.

Reader, I denounce this notion of a middle class as an immense and soul-ruining delusion. I warn you strongly not to be carried away by it. It is as vain an invention as the Pope's purgatory. It is a refuge of lies, a castle in the air, a Russian ice-palace, a vast unreality, an empty dream. This middle class is a class of Christians no where spoken of in the Bible!

There were two classes in the day of Noah's flood; those who were inside the ark, and those who were outside. There were two classes in the parable of the Gospel net; those who are called the good fish, and those who are called the bad. There were two classes in the parable of the ten virgins; those who are described as wise, and those who are described as foolish. There were two classes in the account of the judgment day; the sheep and the goats. There were two sides of the throne; the right hand and the left. There were two abodes when the last sentence has been passed; heaven and hell.

And just so there are only two classes in the visible Church on earth; those who are in the state of nature, and those who are in the state of grace—those who are in the narrow way, and those who are in the broad—those who have faith, and those who have no faith—those who have been converted, and those who have not been converted—those who are with Christ, and those who are against Him—those who gather with Him, and those who scatter abroad—those who are wheat and those who are chaff. Into these two classes the whole professing Church of Christ may be divided. Beside these two classes there is none.

Reader, dear reader, see now what cause there is for self-inquiry. Are you among the wheat, or among the chaff? Neutrality is impossible. Either you are in one class, or in the other. Which is it of the two?

You attend church perhaps. You go to the Lord's table. You like good people. You can distinguish between good preaching and bad. You think Popery false, and oppose it firmly. You think Protestantism true, and support it cordially. You subscribe to religious societies. You attend religious meetings. You sometimes read religious books. It is well—it is very well. It is good—it is all very good. It is more than can be said of many. But still this is not a straightforward answer to my question—Are you wheat, or are you chaff?

Have you been born again? Are you a new creature? Have you put off the old man, and put on the new? Have you ever felt your sins, and repented of them? Are you looking simply to Christ for pardon and eternal life? Do you love Christ? Do you serve Christ? Do you loathe heart-sins, and fight against them? Do you long for perfect holiness, and follow hard after it? Have you come out from the world? Do you delight in the Bible? Do you wrestle in prayer? Do you love Christ's people? Do you try to do good to the world? Are you vile in your own eyes, and willing to take the lowest place? Are you a Christian in business, and on week days, and by your own

fireside? Oh, think, think, think on these things, and then perhaps you will be better able to tell the state of your soul?

Reader, I beseech you not to turn away from my question, however unpleasant it may be. Answer it, though it may prick your conscience, and cut you to the heart. Answer it, though it may prove you in the wrong, and expose your fearful danger. Rest not, rest not, until you know how it is between you and God. Better a thousand times find out that you are in an evil case, and repent in time—than live on in uncertainty, and be lost eternally.

Reader, remember my question. Begin to meditate on it this very day. Are you wheat or chaff?

II. Let me show you, in the second place, ***the TIME when the two great classes of mankind shall be separated.***

The text at the beginning of this tract foretells a separation. It says that Christ shall one day do to His professing Church what the farmer does to his corn. He shall winnow and sift it. "He will thoroughly cleanse His threshing floor." And then the wheat and the chaff shall be divided.

There is no separation yet. Good and bad are now all mingled together in the visible Church of Christ. Believers and unbelievers—converted and unconverted—holy and unholy—all are to be found now among those who call themselves Christians. They sit side by side in our assemblies. They kneel side by side in our pews. They listen side by side to our sermons. They sometimes come up side by side to the Lord's table, and receive the same bread and wine from our hands.

But it shall not always be so! Christ shall come the second time with His fan in His hand. He shall purge His Church, even as He purified the temple. And then the wheat and the chaff shall be separated, and each go to its own place!

Before Christ comes, *separation is impossible.* It is not in man's power to effect it. There lives not the minister on earth who can read the hearts of everyone in his congregation. About some he may speak decidedly—he cannot about all. Who have oil in their lamps—and who have not; who have grace as well as profession—and who have profession only, and no grace; who are children of God—and who of the devil. All these are questions which, in many cases, we cannot accurately decide. The winnowing fork is not put into **our** hands!

Grace is sometimes so weak and feeble, that it looks like nature. Nature is sometimes so plausible and well-dressed, that it looks like grace. I believe many of us would have said that Judas was as good as any of the apostles—and yet he proved a traitor. I believe we should have said that Peter was a reprobate when he denied his Lord—and yet he repented immediately, and rose again. We are but fallible men. We know in part, and prophecy in part. **We scarcely understand our own hearts. It is no great wonder if we cannot read the hearts of others.**

But it will not always be so. There is One coming who never errs in judgment, and is perfect in knowledge. Jesus shall purge His floor. Jesus shall sift the chaff from the wheat. I wait for this. Until then I will lean to the side of charity in my judgments. I would rather tolerate much chaff in the Church—than cast out one grain of wheat. He shall soon come who has His fan in His hand—and then the certainty about everyone shall be known.

Before Christ comes, *I do not expect to see a perfect Church.* There cannot be such a thing. The wheat and the chaff, in the present state of things, will always be found together. I pity those who leave one Church and join another, because of a few faults and unsound members. I pity them, because they are fostering ideas which never can be realized. I pity them, because they are seeking that which cannot be found. I see chaff everywhere. I see imperfections and infirmities of some kind in every church on earth. I believe there are few tables of the Lord, if any, where all the communicants are converted. I often see loud-talking professors exalted as saints. I often see holy and contrite believers set down as having no grace at all. I am satisfied if men are too scrupulous, they may go fluttering about, like Noah's dove, all their days, and never find rest.

Reader, do you desire a perfect Church? You must wait for the day of Christ's appearing. Then, and not until then, you will see a glorious Church, having neither spot nor wrinkle, or any such thing. Then, and not until then, the floor will be purged.

Before Christ comes, *I do not look for the conversion of the world.* How can it be, if He is to find wheat and chaff side by side in the day of His second coming? I believe some Christians expect that missions will fill the earth with the knowledge of Christ, and that little by little, sin will disappear, and a state of perfect holiness gradually glide in. I cannot see with their eyes. I think they are mistaking God's purposes, and sowing for themselves bitter disappointment. I expect nothing of the kind. I see nothing in the Bible, or in the world around me to make me expect it. I have never heard of a single parish entirely converted to God, in England or Scotland, or of anything like it. And why am I to look for a different result from the preaching of the Gospel in other lands? I only expect to see a few raised up as witnesses to Christ in every nation—some in one place, and some in another. Then I expect the Lord Jesus will come in glory, with His winnowing fork in His hand. And when He has purged His floor, and not until then, His kingdom will begin.

No separation and no perfection until Christ comes! This is my creed. I am not moved when the infidel asks me why all the world is not converted, if Christianity is really true? I answer, It was never promised that it would be so in the present order of things. The Bible tells me that believers will always be few—that corruptions, and divisions, and heresies, will always abound—and that when my Lord returns to earth He will find plenty of chaff.

No perfection until Christ comes! I am not disturbed when men say, "Make all the people good Christians at home before you send missionaries to the heathen abroad." I answer, If I am to wait for that, I will wait forever. When we have done all at home, the Church will still be a mixed body—it will contain some wheat and much chaff.

But Christ will come again. Sooner or later there shall be a separation of the visible Church into two companies, and fearful shall that separation be! The wheat shall make up one company. The chaff shall make up another. The one company will be all godly. The other company will be all ungodly. Each shall be by themselves, and a great gulf between, that none can pass. Blessed indeed shall the righteous be in that day! They shall shine like stars, no longer obscured with clouds. They shall be beautiful as the lily, no longer choked with thorns.

Wretched indeed will the ungodly be! How corrupt will corruption be when left without one grain of salt to season it! How dark will

darkness be when left without one spark of light! Ah, reader, it is not enough to respect and admire the Lord's people; you must belong to them, or you will one day be parted from them forever. There will be no chaff in heaven. Many, many are the families, where one will be taken and another left.

Who is there now among the readers of these pages who loves the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity? If I know anything of the heart of a Christian, your greatest trials are in the company of worldly people—your greatest joys in the company of the saints. Yes—there are many weary days, when your spirit feels broken and crushed by the earthly tone of all around you—days when you could cry with David, "Woe is me that I dwell in Mesech, and have my habitation in the tents of Kedar." And yet there are hours when your soul is so refreshed and revived by meeting some of God's dear children, that it seems like heaven on earth. Do I not speak to your heart? Are not these things true? See then how you should long for the time when Christ shall come again. See how you should pray daily that the Lord would hasten His kingdom, and say to Him, "Come quickly, Lord Jesus!"

Then, and not until then, shall be a pure unmixed communion. Then, and not until then, the saints shall all be together, and shall go out from one another's presence no more. Wait a little. Wait a little. Scorn and contempt will soon be over. Laughter and ridicule shall soon have an end. Slander and misrepresentation will soon cease. Your Savior shall come and plead your cause. And then, as Moses said to Korah, "The Lord will show who are His."

"This is certain, when the elect are all converted, then Christ will come to judgment. As he who rows a boat, stays until all the passengers are taken into his boat, and then he rows away; so Christ stays until all the elect are gathered in, and then He will hasten away to judgment."—*Thomas Watson*, 1660.

Who is there among the readers of these pages, who knows his heart is not right in the sight of God? See how you should fear and tremble at the thought of Christ's appearing. Alas, indeed, for the man that lives and dies with nothing better than a cloak of religion! In the day when Christ shall purge His floor, you will be shown and exposed in your true colors. You may deceive ministers, and friends, and neighbors—but you cannot deceive Christ. The paint and varnish of a heartless Christianity will never stand the fire of that day. The Lord is a God of knowledge, and by Him actions are weighed. You will find that the eye which saw Achan and Gehazi, has read your secrets, and searched out your hidden things! You will hear those awful words, "Friend, how did you get in here, not having a wedding garment?"

Oh, tremble at the thought of the day of sifting and separation! Surely hypocrisy is a most losing game. Surely it never is good, to try to deceive God. Surely it never answers, like Ananias and Sapphira, to pretend to give God something, and yet to keep back your heart. It all fails at last. Your joy is but for a moment. Your hopes are no better than a dream. Oh, tremble, tremble—tremble, and repent!

Reader, think on these things. Remember my question. Begin to meditate on it this very day. Are you wheat or chaff?

III. Let me show you, in the third place, ***the portion which Christ's people shall receive, when He comes to purge His threshing floor.***

The text at the beginning of this tract tells us this in good and comfortable words. It tells us that Christ shall "gather His wheat into His barn."

When the Lord Jesus comes the second time, He shall collect His believing people into a place of safety. He will send His angels, and gather them from every quarter. The sea shall give up the dead that are in it, and the graves the dead that are in them, and the living shall be changed. Not one poor sinner of mankind who has ever laid hold on Christ by faith shall be overlooked in that company. Not one single grain of wheat shall be missing, and left outside, when judgments fall upon a wicked world. There shall be a barn for the wheat of the earth, and into that barn all the wheat shall be brought.

Ah, reader, it is a sweet and comfortable thought, that "the Lord cares for the righteous." But how much the Lord cares for them, I fear is little known, and dimly seen. They have their trials, beyond question—and these both many and great. The flesh is weak. The world is full of snares. The cross is heavy. The way is narrow. The companions are few. But still they have strong consolations, if their eyes were but open to see them. Like Hagar, they have a well of water near them, even in the wilderness, though they often do not find it out. Like Mary, they have Jesus standing by their side, though often they are not aware of it for very tears.

Bear with me, while I try to tell you something about **Christ's care for poor sinners who believe in Him**. Alas, indeed, that it should be needful! But we live in a day of weak and feeble statements. The danger of the state of nature is feebly exposed. The privileges of the state of grace are feebly set forth. Hesitating souls are not encouraged. Disciples are not established and confirmed. The man outside of Christ is not rightly alarmed. The man in Christ is not rightly built up. The one sleeps on, and seldom has his conscience pricked. The other creeps and crawls all his days, and never thoroughly understands the riches of his inheritance. Truly this is a sore disease, and one that I would gladly help to cure. Truly it is a melancholy thing that the people of God should never go up to mount Pisgah, and never know the length and breadth of their possessions. To be brethren of Christ, and sons of God by adoption, to have full and perfect forgiveness and the renewing of the Holy Spirit, to have a place in the book of life and a name on the breast-plate of the Great High Priest in heaven—all these are glorious things indeed. But still they are not the whole of a believer's portion. They are upper springs indeed—but still there are nether springs beside.

The Lord *takes pleasure in His believing people.* Though filthy in their own eyes, they are lovely and honorable in His. They are altogether beautiful—He sees no spot in them. Their weaknesses and shortcomings do not break off the union between Him and them. He chose them, knowing all their hearts. He took them for His own with a perfect understanding of all their debts, liabilities, and infirmities, and He will never break His covenant and cast them off. When they fall, He will raise them again. When they wander, He will bring them back. Their *prayers* are pleasant to Him. As a father loves the first stammering efforts of his child to speak, so the Lord loves the poor feeble petitions of His people. He endorses them with His own mighty intercession, and gives them power on high. Their *services* are pleasant to Him. As a father delights in the first daisy that his child picks and brings him, even so the Lord is pleased with the weak attempts of His people to serve Him. Not a cup of cold water shall lose its reward. Not a word spoken in love shall ever be forgotten. He told the Hebrews of Noah's faith—but not of his drunkenness; of Rahab's faith—but not of her lie. Oh, reader, it is a blessed thing to be God's wheat!

The Lord *cares for His believing people in their lives.* Their **dwelling place** is well known. The "street called strait," where Paul lodged; the "house by the sea-side," where Peter prayed—were all familiar to their Lord. None have such **attendants** as they have—angels rejoice when they are born again, angels minister to them, and angels encamp around them. None have such **food**—their bread is given them, and their water sure, and they have food to eat of which the world knows nothing. None have such **company** as they have—the Spirit dwells with them. The Father and the Son come to them, and make their abode with them. Their **steps** are all ordered from grace to glory. Those who persecute them persecute Christ Himself, and those who hurt them hurt the apple of the Lord's eye.

Their trials and temptations are all measured out by a wise Physician—not a grain of bitterness is ever mingled in their cup, that is not good for the health of their souls. Their temptations, like Job's, are all under God's control—Satan cannot touch a hair of their head without their Lord's permission, nor even tempt them above that which they shall be able to bear. "As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear Him." He never afflicts them willingly. He leads them by the right way. He withholds nothing that is really for their good. Come what will, there is always a needs-be. When they are placed in the furnace, it is that they may be purified. When they are chastened, it is that they may become more holy. When they are pruned, it is to make them more fruitful. When they are transplanted from place to place, it is that they may bloom more brightly. All things are continually working together for their good. Like the bee they extract sweetness even out of the bitterest flowers. Ah, reader, it is a blessed thing to be Christ's wheat!

The Lord *cares for His believing people in their deaths.* Their times are all in the Lord's hand. The hairs of their heads are all numbered, and not one can ever fall to the ground without their Father. They are kept on earth until they are ripe and ready for glory, and not one moment longer. When they have had sun and rain enough, wind and storm enough, cold and heat enough—when the ear is perfected—then, and not until then, the sickle is put in. They are all immortal until their work is done. There is not a disease that can loosen the pins of their tabernacle, until the Lord gives the word. A thousand may fall at their right hand—but there is not a plague that can touch them until the Lord sees good. There is not a physician that can keep them alive, when the Lord gives the word. When they come to their death-bed, the Everlasting Arms are round about them, and makes all their bed in their sickness. When they die, they die like Moses—according to the word of the Lord, at the right time, and in the right way. And when they breathe their last, they fall asleep in Christ, and are at once carried, like Lazarus, into Abraham's bosom. Ah, reader, it is a blessed thing to be Christ's wheat! When the sun of other men is setting, the sun of the believer is rising. When other men are laying aside their honors, he is putting his on. Death locks the door on the unbeliever—and shuts him out from hope. But death opens the door to the believer—and lets him into paradise.

And the Lord *will care for His believing people in the dreadful day of His appearing*. The flaming fire shall not come near them. The voice of the Archangel and the trumpet of God shall proclaim no terrors to their ears. Sleeping or waking, living or dead, moldering in the coffin, or standing at the post of daily duty—believers shall be secure and unmoved. They shall lift up their heads with joy, when they see redemption drawing near. They shall be changed, and put on their beautiful garments in the twinkling of an eye. They shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. Jesus will do nothing to a sin-laden world until all His people are safe. There was an ark for Noah when the flood began. There was a Zoar for Lot when the fire fell on Sodom. There was a Pella for early Christians when Jerusalem was besieged. There was a Zurich for English Reformers when Popish Mary came to the throne. And there will be a barn for all the wheat of the earth in the last day. Ah, reader, it is a blessed thing to be Christ's wheat!

I often wonder at the miserable faithlessness of those among us who are believers. Next to the hardness of the unconverted heart, I call it one of the greatest wonders in the world. I wonder that with such mighty reasons for confidence we can still be so full of doubts. I marvel, above all things, how any can deny the doctrine that Christ's people persevere unto the end, and can imagine that He who loved them so as to die for them upon the cross, will ever let them be cast away. I cannot think so. I do not believe the Lord Jesus will ever lose one of His flock. He will not let Satan pluck away from Him—so much as one sick lamb. He will not allow one bone of His mystical body to be broken. He will not allow one jewel to fall from His crown. He and His bride have been once joined in an everlasting covenant, and they shall never never be put asunder.

The trophies won by earthly conquerors have often been wrested from them, and carried off—but this shall never be said of the trophies of Him who triumphed for us on the cross. "My sheep," He says, "shall never perish." (John 10:28.) I take my stand on that text. I know not how it can be evaded. If words have any meaning, the perseverance of Christ's people is there.

I do not believe when David had rescued the lamb from the paws of the lion, that he left it weak and wounded to perish in the wilderness. I cannot believe when the Lord Jesus has delivered a soul from the snare of the devil, that He will ever leave that soul to take his chance, and wrestle on in his own feebleness against sin, the devil, and the world.

Reader, I would be sure, if you were present at a shipwreck, and seeing some helpless child tossing on the waves, were to plunge into the sea, and save him at the risk of your own life—I would be sure you would not be content with merely bringing that child safe to shore. You would not lay him down when you had reached the land, and say, "I will do no more. He is weak—he is insensible—he is cold—it matters not; I have done enough. I have delivered him from the waters—he is not drowned." You would not do it. You would not say so. You would not treat that child in such a manner. You would lift him in your arms. You would carry him to the nearest house. You would try to bring back warmth and animation. You would use every moans to restore health and vigor. You would never leave him until his recovery was a certain thing.

And can you suppose the Lord Jesus Christ is less merciful, or less compassionate? Can you think He would suffer on the cross and die, and yet leave it uncertain whether believers in Him would be saved? Can you think He would wrestle with death and hell, and go down to the grave for our sakes—and yet allow our eternal life to hang on such a thread as our poor miserable endeavors?

Oh, no! He does not do so. He is a perfect and complete Savior. Those whom He loves, He loves unto the end. Those whom He washes in His blood, He never leaves nor forsakes. He puts His fear into their hearts, so that they shall not depart from Him. Where He begins a work, there He also finishes. All whom He transplants in His garden enclosed on earth, He transplants sooner or later into His heavenly paradise. All whom He quickens by His spirit, He will also bring with Him when He enters His kingdom. There is a barn for every grain of the wheat. All shall appear in Zion before God.

From false grace men may fall—and fall both finally and foully. I never doubt this. I see proof of it continually. From true grace men never do fall totally. They never did, and they never will. If they commit sin, like Peter—they shall repent and rise again. If they err from the right way, like David—they shall be brought back. It is not any strength or power of their own that keeps them from apostasy. They are kept because the power, and love, and promises of the Trinity are all engaged on their side. The election of God the Father shall not be fruitless; the intercession of God the Son shall not be ineffectual; the love of God the Spirit shall not be labor in vain. The Lord shall keep the feet of His saints. They shall all be more than conquerors through Him who loved them. They shall all conquer, and none die eternally.*

* "Blessed forever and ever be that one, whose faith has made him the child of God. The earth may shake, the pillars of the world may tremble under us, the face of the heavens may be appalled, the sun may lose his light, the moon her beauty, the stars their glory—but concerning the man who trusts in God—what is there in the world that shall change his heart, overthrow his faith, alter his affection toward God, or the affection of God to him?"—*Richard Hooker*. 1585.

Reader, if you have not yet taken up the cross and become Christ's disciple, you little know what privileges you are missing. Peace with God now and glory hereafter—the Everlasting Arms to keep you by the way, and the barn of safety in the end—all these are freely offered to you without money and without price. You may say that Christians have tribulations—you forget that they have also consolations. You may say they have peculiar sorrows—you forget they have also peculiar joys. You see but half the Christian life. You see not all. You see the warfare—but not the food and the wages. You see the tossing and conflict of the outward part of Christianity; you see not the hidden treasures which lie deep within. Like Elisha's servant, you see the enemies of God's children—but you do not, like Elisha, see the chariots and horses of fire which protect them. Oh, judge not by outward appearances! Be sure that the least drop of the water of life, is better than all the rivers of the world. Remember the barn and the crown. Be wise in time.

Reader, if you feel that you are a weak disciple, think not that weakness shuts you out from any of the privileges of which I have been speaking. Weak faith is true faith, and weak grace is true grace; and both are the gift of Him who never gives in vain. Fear not, neither be discouraged. Doubt not, neither despair. Jesus will never break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax. The **babes** in a family are as much loved and thought of as the elder brothers and sisters. The tender **seedlings** in a garden are as diligently looked after as the old trees. The **lambs** in the flock are as carefully tended by the good shepherd as the old sheep. Oh, rest assured it is just the same in Christ's family, in Christ's garden, in Christ's flock. All are loved. All are tenderly thought of. All are cared for. And all shall be found in His barn at last. Reader, think on these things. Begin to meditate on my question this very day. Are you wheat or chaff?

IV. Let me show you, in the last place, ***the portion which remains for all who are not Christ's people.***

The text at the beginning of this tract describes this in words which should make our ears tingle—Christ shall "burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire!"

When the Lord Jesus Christ comes to purge His threshing floor, He shall punish all who are not His disciples with a fearful punishment. All who are found impenitent and unbelieving—all who have held the truth in unrighteousness—all who have clung to sin, stuck to the world, and set their affection on things below—all who are without Christ. All such shall come to an awful end. Christ shall "burn up the chaff!"

Their punishment shall be *most SEVERE.* There is no pain like that of burning. Put your finger in the candle for a moment, if you doubt this, and try. Fire is the most destructive and devouring of all elements. Look into the mouth of a blast furnace, and think what it would be to be there. Fire is of all elements most opposed to life. Creatures can live in air, and earth, and water—but nothing can live in fire. Yet fire is the portion to which the Christless and unbelieving will come. Christ will "burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire!"

Their punishment shall be *ETERNAL.* Millions of ages shall pass away, and the fire into which the chaff is cast shall still burn on. That fire shall never burn low and become dim. The fuel of that fire shall never waste away and be consumed. It is "unquenchable fire."

Oh, reader, these are sad and painful things to speak of! I have no pleasure in dwelling on them. I could rather say with the apostle Paul, "I have great sorrow." But they are things written for our learning, and it is good to consider them. They are a part of that Scripture which is all profitable, and they ought to be heard. Painful as the subject of hell is, it is one about which I dare not, cannot, must not be silent. Who would desire to speak of hell-fire if God had not spoken of it? When God has spoken of it so plainly, who can safely hold his peace?

I dare not shut my eyes to the fact, that a deep-rooted infidelity lurks in men's minds on the subject of hell. I see it oozing out in the utter apathy of some—they eat, and drink, and sleep as if there was no wrath to come. I see it creeping forth in the coldness of others about their neighbors' souls—they show little anxiety to pluck brands from the fire. I desire to denounce such infidelity with all my might. Believing that there are terrors of the Lord, as well as the recompense of reward, I call upon all who profess to believe the Bible, to be on their guard.

I know that some do not believe there is any hell at all. They think it impossible there can be such a place. They call it inconsistent with the mercy of God. They say it is too dreadful an idea to be really true. The devil of course rejoices in the views of such people. They help his kingdom mightily. They are preaching up his old favorite doctrine, "You shall not surely die."

I know furthermore that some do not believe that hell is eternal. They tell us it is incredible that a compassionate God will punish men forever. He will surely open the prison-doors at last. This also is a mighty help to the devil's cause. "Take your ease," he whispers to sinners—"if you do make a mistake, never mind, it is not forever."

I know also that some believe there is a hell—but never allow that anybody is going there. All people with them are good as soon as they die—all were sincere—all meant well—and all, they hope, got to heaven. Alas, what a common delusion is this! I can well understand the feeling of the little girl who asked her mother where all the wicked people were buried, "for she found no mention on the gravestones of any except the good."

And I know very well that some believe there is a hell—but never like it to be spoken of. It is a subject that should always be kept back in their opinion. They see no profit in bringing it forward, and are rather shocked when it is mentioned. This also is an immense help to the devil. "Hush, hush!" says Satan, "say nothing about hell." The fowler wishes to hear no noise when he lays his snare. The wolf would like the shepherd to sleep while he prowls round the fold. The devil rejoices when Christians are silent about hell.

Reader, all these notions are the opinions of man. What is it to you and I, what man thinks in religion? Man will not judge us at the last day. Man's fancies and traditions are not to be our guide in this life. There is but one point to be settled—"What says the Word of God?"

Do you believe the Bible? Then depend upon it, ***hell is real and true***. It is as true as heaven—as true as justification by faith—as true as the fact that Christ died upon the cross—as true as the Dead Sea. There is not a fact or doctrine which you may not lawfully doubt, if you doubt hell. Disbelieve hell, and you unscrew, unsettle, and unpin everything in Scripture. You may as well throw your Bible away at once. From "no hell" to "no God" there is but a series of steps.

Do you believe the Bible? Then depend upon it, ***hell will have inhabitants***. The wicked shall certainly be turned into hell, and all the people that forget God. These shall go away into everlasting punishment. The same blessed Savior who now sits on a throne of grace, will one day sit on a throne of judgment—and men will see there is such a thing as "the wrath of the Lamb." The same lips which now say "Come—come unto Me," will one day say "Depart, you who are cursed!" Alas, how awful the thought of being condemned by Christ Himself—judged by the Savior—sentenced to misery by the Lamb!

Do you believe the Bible? Then depend upon it, ***hell will be intense and unutterable woe***. It is vain to talk of all the expressions about being only figures of speech. The pit, the prison, the worm, the fire, the thirst, the blackness, the darkness, the weeping, the gnashing of teeth, the second death—all these may be figures of speech if you please. But Bible figures mean something, beyond all question, and here they mean something which man's mind can never fully conceive. Oh, reader, the miseries of mind and conscience are far worse than those of the body! The whole extent of hell, the present suffering, the bitter recollection of the past, the hopeless prospect of the future, will never be thoroughly known except by those who go there!

Do you believe the Bible? Then depend upon it, ***hell is eternal***. It must be eternal, or words have no meaning at all. Forever and ever; everlasting; unquenchable; never-dying—all these are expressions used about hell, and expressions that cannot be explained away. It must be eternal, or the very foundations of heaven are cast down. If hell has an end, heaven has an end too. They both stand or fall together. It must be, or else every doctrine of the Gospel is undermined. If a man may escape hell at length without faith in Christ, or sanctification of the Spirit—then sin is no longer an infinite evil, and there was no such great need for Christ making an atonement. And where is there warrant for saying that hell can ever change a heart, or make it fit for heaven? Hell must be eternal, or hell would cease to be hell altogether. Give a man hope, and he will bear anything. Grant a hope of deliverance, however distant, and hell is but a drop of water. Ah, reader, these are solemn things! **FOREVER is the most solemn word in the Bible!** Alas, for that day which shall have no tomorrow! that day when men shall seek death, and not find it, and shall desire to die—but death shall flee from them! Who shall dwell with devouring fire! Who shall dwell with everlasting burnings!

Do you believe the Bible? Then depend upon it, ***hell is a subject that ought not to be kept back***. It is striking to observe the many texts about it in Scripture. It is striking to observe that none say so much about it as our Lord Jesus Christ, that gracious and merciful Savior, and the apostle John, whose heart seems full of love. Truly it may well be doubted whether we ministers speak of it as much as we ought. I cannot forget the words of a dying hearer of Mr. Newton's—"Sir, you often told me of Christ and salvation; why did you not oftener remind me of hell and danger?"

Let others hold their peace about hell if they will—I dare not do so. I see it plainly in Scripture, and I must speak of it. I fear that thousands are on that broad way that leads to it, and I would sincerely arouse them to a sense of the peril before them. What would you say of the man who saw his neighbor's house in danger of being burnt down, and never raise the cry of "Fire"? What ought to be said of us as ministers, if we call ourselves watchmen for souls, and yet see the fires of hell raging in the distance, and never give the alarm? Call it bad taste, if you like, to speak of hell. Call it charity to make things pleasant, and speak smoothly, and soothe men with constant lullaby of peace. From such notions of taste and charity may I ever be delivered! My notion of charity is to warn men plainly of danger. My notion of taste in the ministerial office, is to declare all the counsel of God. If I never spoke of hell, I would think I had kept back something that was profitable—and would look on myself as an accomplice of the devil.

Reader, I beseech you, in all tender affection, beware of false views of the subject on which I have been dwelling. Beware of new and strange doctrines about hell and the eternity of punishment. Beware of manufacturing a God of your own: a God who is all mercy—but not just; a God who is all love—but not holy; a God who has a heaven for everybody—but a hell for none; a God who can allow good and bad to be side by side in time—but will make no distinction between good and bad in eternity. Such a God is an idol of your own imagination! It is as true an idol as any snake or crocodile in an Egyptian temple—as true an idol as was ever molded out of brass or clay. The hands of your own imagination and sentimentality have made him. He is not the God of the Bible—and beside the God of the Bible there is no God at all. Your heaven would be no heaven at all. A heaven containing all sorts of sinful people, would be miserable discord indeed. Alas, for the eternity of such a heaven! There would be little difference between it and hell. Ah, reader, there is a hell! There is a fire for the chaff! Take heed, lest you find it out to your cost too late!-

Beware of being wise above that which is written. Beware of forming fanciful theories of your own, and then trying to make the Bible square with them. Beware of making selections from your Bible to suit your taste—refusing, like a spoiled child, whatever you think bitter—seizing, like a spoiled child, whatever you think sweet. What is all this but taking Jehoiakim's penknife? What does it amount to but telling God, that you, a poor short-lived worm, know what is good for you better than He? It will not do! It will not do. You must take the Bible as it is. You must read it all, and believe it all. You must come to the reading of it in the spirit of a little child. Dare not to say, "I believe this verse, for I like it. I reject that, for I do not like it. I receive this, for I can agree with it. I refuse that, for I cannot reconcile it with my views." Nay! but O man, who are you that replies against God? By what right do you talk in this way? Surely it were better to say over every chapter in the Word, "Speak, Lord, for your servant hears." Ah, reader, if men would do this, they would never deny hell, the chaff, and the fire.

Think on these things once more. Meditate upon them. Remember my question, "Are you wheat or chaff?"

I have shown you the **two great classes of mankind**, the wheat and the chaff.

I have shown you the **separation** which will one day take place.

I have shown you the **safety of the Lord's people**.

I have shown you the **fearful portion of the Christless** and unbelieving.

I commend these things to your conscience, as in the sight of God. And now, reader, let me say four things in **CONCLUSION**, and then I am done.

1. Settle it down in your mind, that the things of which I have been speaking are *all real and true*.

I do believe that many never see the great truths of religion in this light. I firmly believe that many never listen to the things they hear from ministers as realities. They regard it all, like Gallio, as a matter of names and words, and nothing more—a huge shadow—a religious play-acting—a vast sham. Macaulay's History of England, Dicken's last Novel, the latest news from France, India, Australia, California, or New York—all these are things they realize. They feel interested and excited about them. But as to the Bible, and heaven, and the kingdom of Christ, and the judgment day—these are subjects that they hear unmoved. They do not really believe them.

Reader, if you have unhappily got into this frame of mind, I charge you to cast it off forever. Whether you mean to hear or forbear, awaken to a thorough conviction that the things I have brought before you are real and true. The wheat, the chaff, the separation, the barn, the fire—all these are great realities; as real as the sun in heaven—as real as the paper which your eyes behold. For my part, I believe in heaven, and I believe in hell. I believe in a coming judgment. I believe in a day of sifting. I am not ashamed to say so. I believe them all, and therefore I write as I do. Oh, reader, take a friend's advice, live as if these things were true!

2. Settle it down in your mind, that the things of which I write *concern YOURSELF*. They are your business, your affair, and your concern. Many, I am satisfied, never look on religion as a matter that concerns themselves. They attend on its outward part, as a decent and proper fashion. They hear sermons. They read religious books. They have their children christened. But all the time they never ask themselves, "What is all this to me?" They sit in our churches like spectators in a theater, or court of law. They read our writings as if they were reading a report of an interesting trial, or of some event far away. But they do not say to themselves, "I am the man!"

Reader, if you have this kind of feeling, depend upon it, it will never do. There must be an end of all this if ever you are to be saved. You are the man I write to, whoever you may be that reads these pages. I write not specially to the rich. I write not specially to the poor. I write to everybody who will read, whatever his rank may be. It is on your soul's account that I am pleading, and not another's. You are spoken of in the text that begins this tract. You are this very day either among the wheat or among the chaff. Your portion will one day either be the barn or the fire. Oh, that men were wise, and would lay these things to heart! Oh, that they would not trifle, dally, linger, live on half-and-half Christians, meaning well—but never acting boldly, and at last awake when it is too late.

3. Settle it down in your mind, that if you are willing to be one of the wheat of the earth, *the Lord Jesus Christ is willing to receive you*.

Does any man suppose that Jesus is not willing to see His barn filled? Do you think He does not desire to bring many sons to glory? Oh—but you little know the depth of His mercy and compassion, if you can think such a thought! He wept over unbelieving Jerusalem. He mourns over the impenitent and the thoughtless in the present day. He sends you invitations by my mouth this hour. He invites you to hear and live, to forsake the way of the foolish, and to go in the paths of understanding. "As I live," He says, "I have no pleasure in the death of him who dies. Turn! Turn! Why will you die?"

Oh, reader, if you never came to Christ for life before, come to Him this very day! Come to Him with the penitent's prayer for mercy and grace. Come to Him without delay. Come to Him while the subject of these pages is still fresh on your mind. Come to Him before another sun rises on the earth, and let the morning find you a new creature.

If you are determined to have the world, and the things of the world—its pleasures and its rewards—its follies and its sins—if you must have your own way, and cannot give up anything for Christ and your soul—if this be your case, there is but one end before you. I fairly warn you. I plainly tell you. You will sooner or later come to the unquenchable fire!

But if any man is willing to be saved, the Lord Jesus Christ stands ready to save him. "Come unto Me," He says, "weary soul, and I will give you rest. Come, guilty and sinful soul, and I will give you free pardon. Come, lost and ruined soul, and I will give you eternal life."

Oh, reader, let this message be a word in season. Arise and call upon the Lord! Let the angels of God rejoice over one more saved soul. Let the courts of heaven hear the good tidings that one more lost sheep is found.

4. Settle it down in your mind, that if you have committed your soul to Christ, *Christ will never allow that soul to perish*.

The Everlasting Arms are round about you. Lean back in them and know your safety. The same hand that was nailed to the cross is holding you. The same wisdom that framed the heavens and the earth is engaged to maintain your cause. The same power that redeemed the tribes from the house of bondage is on your side. The same love that bore with and carried Israel from Egypt to Canaan is pledged to keep you. Ah, reader, they are well kept whom Christ keeps! Our faith may repose calmly on such a bed, as Christ's omnipotence.

Take comfort, doubting believer. Why are you cast down? The love of Jesus is no summer-day fountain—no man ever yet saw its bottom. The compassion of Jesus is a fire that never yet burned low; the cold, grey ashes of that fire have never yet been seen. Take comfort. In your heart you may find little cause for rejoicing. But you may always rejoice in the Lord.

You say your faith is so small. But where is it said that none shall be saved except their faith be great? And after all, "Who gave you any faith at all?" The very fact that you have any faith is a token for good.

You say your sins are so many. But where is the sin, or heap of sins that the blood of Jesus cannot wash away? And after all, "Who told you you had any sins? That feeling never came from yourself." Blessed indeed is that one, who really knows and feels that he is a sinner.

Take comfort, I say once more, if you have really come to Christ. Take comfort, and know your privileges. Cast every care on Jesus. Tell every want to Jesus. Roll every burden on Jesus—your sins, unbelief, doubts, fears, anxieties—lay them all on Christ. He loves to see you doing so. He loves to be employed as your High Priest. He loves to be trusted. He loves to see His people ceasing from the vain effort to carry their burdens for themselves.

I commend these things to your notice. Only be among Christ's wheat now, and then as sure as the Bible is true—you shall be in Christ's barn forever!

THE CROSS OF CHRIST

by J. C. Ryle

"Far be it from me to boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world." Galatians 6:14

What do we think and feel about the cross of Christ? We live in a Christian land. We probably attend the worship of a Christian church. We have, most of us, been baptized in the name of Christ. We profess and call ourselves Christians. All this is well—it is more than can be said of millions in the world. *But what do we think and feel about the cross of Christ?*

I want to examine what one of the greatest Christians who ever lived, thought of the cross of Christ. He has written down his opinion—he has given his judgment in words that cannot be mistaken. The man I mean is the Apostle Paul. The place where you will find his opinion, is in the letter which the Holy Spirit inspired him to write to the Galatians. The words in which his judgment is set down, are these, "But far be it from me to boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Now what did Paul mean by saying this? He meant to declare strongly, that he trusted in nothing but "Jesus Christ crucified" for the pardon of his sins and the salvation of his soul. Let others, if they would, look elsewhere for salvation; let others, if they were so disposed, trust in other things for pardon and peace—for his part the apostle was determined to rest on nothing, lean on nothing, build his hope on nothing, place confidence in nothing, boast in nothing, "except in the cross of Jesus Christ."

I wish to say something about "the cross" to the readers of this volume. Believe me, the subject is one of the deepest importance. This is no mere question of controversy. It is not one of those points on which people may agree to differ, and feel that differences will not shut them out of heaven. A man must be right on this subject, or he is lost forever. Heaven or hell, happiness or misery, life or death, blessing or cursing in the last day—all hinges on the answer to this question, "What do you think about the cross of Christ?"

I. Let me show you, first of all, ***what the Apostle Paul did NOT boast in.***

There are many things that Paul might have boasted in, if he had thought as some do in this day. If ever there was one on earth who had something to boast of in himself, that man was the great apostle of the Gentiles. Now if he did not dare to boast, who shall?

He never boasted in his ***national privileges***. He was a Jew by birth, and, as he tells us himself, "A Hebrew of the Hebrews." (Phil. 3:5.) He might have said, like many of his brethren, "I have Abraham for my forefather I am not a dark unenlightened heathen; I am one of the favored people of God—I have been admitted into covenant with God by circumcision. I am a far better man than the ignorant Gentiles." But he never said so. He never boasted in anything of this kind. Never, for one moment!

He never boasted in **his own *works***. None ever worked so hard for God as he did. He was "more abundant in labors" than any of the apostles. (2 Cor. 11:23.) No man ever preached so much, traveled so much, and endured so many hardships for Christ's cause. None was ever made the means of converting so many souls, did so much good to the world, and made himself so useful to mankind. No Father of the early Church, no Reformer, no Puritan, no Missionary, no minister, no layman—no one man could ever be named, who did so many good works as the Apostle Paul. But did he ever boast in them, as if they were in the least meritorious, and could save his soul? Never! Never for one moment!

He never boasted in ***his knowledge***. He was a man of great gifts naturally, and, after he was converted, the Holy Spirit gave him greater gifts still. He was a mighty preacher, and a mighty speaker, and a weighty writer. He was as great with his pen as he was with his tongue. He could reason equally well with Jews and Gentiles. He could argue with infidels at Corinth, or Pharisees at Jerusalem, or self-righteous people in Galatia. He knew many deep things. He had been in the third heaven, and "heard unspeakable words." (2 Cor. 12:4.) He had received the spirit of prophecy, and could foretell things yet to come. But did he ever boast in his knowledge, as if it could justify him before God? Never—never! Never for one moment!

He never boasted in ***his graces***. If ever there was one who abounded in graces, that man was Paul. He was full of **love**. How tenderly and affectionately he used to write! He could feel for souls like a mother or a nurse feeling for her child. He was a **bold** man.

He cared not whom he opposed when truth was at stake. He cared not what risks he ran when souls were to be won. He was a **self-denying** man—in hunger and thirst often, in cold and nakedness, in watchings and fastings. He was a **humble** man. He thought himself less than the least of all saints, and the chief of sinners. He was a **prayerful** man. See how it comes out at the beginning of all his Epistles. He was a **thankful** man. His thanksgivings and his prayers walked side by side. But he never boasted in all this, never valued himself on it—never rested his soul's hopes on it. Oh, no—never for a moment!

He never boasted *in* ***his Churchmanship***. If ever there was a good Churchman, that man was Paul. He was himself a chosen apostle. He was a founder of churches, and an ordainer of ministers—Timothy and Titus, and many elders, received their first commission from his hands. He was the beginner of services and sacraments in many a dark place. Many an one did he baptize; many an one did he receive to the Lord's Table; many a meeting for prayer, and praise, and preaching, did he begin and carry on. He was the setter up of discipline in many a young Church. Whatever ordinances, and rules, and ceremonies were observed in many Churches, were first recommended by him. But did he ever boast in his office and Church standing? Does he ever speak as if his Churchmanship would save him, justify him, put away his sins, and make him acceptable before God? Oh, no! Never—never! Never for a moment!

Now if the apostle Paul never boasted in any of these things, who in all the world, from one end to the other—who has any right to boast in them in our day? If Paul said, "God forbid that I should boast in anything whatever except the cross," who shall dare to say, "I have something to boast of—I am a better man than Paul"?

Who is there among the readers of this paper that trusts in any goodness of his own? Who is there that is resting on his own amendments—his own morality—his own churchmanship—his own works and performances of any kind whatever? Who is there that is leaning the weight of his soul on anything whatever of his own, in the smallest possible degree? Learn, I say, that you are very unlike the apostle Paul. Learn that your religion is not *apostolic religion*.

Who is there among the readers of this paper that trusts in his religious profession for salvation? Who is there that is valuing himself on his baptism, or his attendance at the Lord's table—his church-going on Sundays, or his daily services during the week—and saying to himself, "What more do I lack?" Learn, I say, this day, that you are very unlike Paul. Your Christianity is *not the Christianity of the New Testament*. Paul would not boast in anything but "the cross." Neither ought you.

Oh, let us beware of self-righteousness! Open sin kills its thousands of souls. Self-righteousness kills its tens of thousands! Go and study humility with the great apostle of the Gentiles. Go and sit with Paul at the foot of the cross. Give up your secret pride. Cast away your vain ideas of your own goodness. Be thankful if you have grace—but never boast in it for a moment. Work for God and Christ, with heart and soul and mind and strength—but never dream for a second of placing confidence in any work of your own.

Think, you who take comfort in some fancied ideas of your own goodness—think, you who wrap up yourselves in the notion, "all must be right, if I keep to my Church,"—think for a moment what a sandy foundation you are building upon! Think how miserably defective your hopes and pleas will look in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment! Whatever people may say of their own goodness while they are strong and healthy, they will find but little to say of it when they are sick and dying. Whatever merit they may see in their own works here in this world, they will discover none in them when they stand before the tribunal of Christ. The light of that great day of judgement will make a wonderful difference in the appearance of all their doings. It will strip off the tinsel, shrivel up the complexion, expose the rottenness of many a deed that is now called good. Their wheat will prove nothing but chaff—their gold will be found nothing but dross. Millions of so-called 'good works' will turn out to have been utterly defective and graceless. They passed current, and were valued among men—they will prove light and worthless in the balance of God. They will be found to have been like the whitened sepulchers of old—fair and beautiful on the outside—but full of corruption on the inside. Alas, for the man who can look forward to the day of judgment, and lean his soul in the smallest degree on anything of his own now!

"Howsoever people when they sit at ease, do vainly tickle their own hearts with the wanton conceit of I know not what proportionable correspondence between their merits and their rewards, which in the trance of their high speculations, they dream that God has measured and laid up as it were in bundles for them—we see notwithstanding by daily experience in a number even of them, that when the hour of death approaches, when they secretly hear themselves summoned to appear and stand at the bar of that Judge, whose brightness causes the eyes of angels themselves to dazzle, all those idle imaginations do then begin to hide their faces. To name merits then is to lay their souls upon the rack. The memory of their own deeds is loathsome unto them. They forsake all things wherein they have put any trust and confidence. No staff to lean upon, no rest, no ease, no comfort then—but only in Christ Jesus."—*Richard Hooker*. 1585.

Once more I say, let us beware of self-righteousness in every possible shape and form. Some people get as much harm from their fancied virtues as others do from their sins. Rest not, rest not until your heart beats in tune with Paul's. Rest not until you can say with him, "far be it from me to boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ!"

II. Let me explain, in the second place, ***what we are to understand by "the cross of Christ."***

The 'cross' is an expression that is used in more than one meaning in the Bible. What did Paul mean when he said, "I boast in the cross of Christ," in the Epistle to the Galatians? This is the point I now wish to examine closely and make clear.

The cross sometimes means that **wooden cross**, on which the Lord Jesus Christ was nailed and put to death on Calvary. This is what Paul had in his mind's eye, when he told the Philippians that Christ "became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." (Phil. 2:8.) This is not the cross in which Paul boasted. He would have shrunk with horror from the idea of boasting in a mere piece of wood. I have no doubt he would have denounced the Roman Catholic adoration of the crucifix, as profane, blasphemous, and idolatrous.

The cross sometimes means the **afflictions and trials** which believers in Christ have to go through, if they follow Christ faithfully, for their religion's sake. This is the sense in which our Lord uses the word when He says, "He who takes not his cross and follows after Me, cannot be my disciple." (Matt. 10:38.) This also is not the sense in which Paul uses the word when he writes to the Galatians. He knew that cross well—he carried it patiently. But he is not speaking of it here.

But the cross also means, in some places, **the doctrine that Christ died for sinners upon the cross**—the atonement that He made for sinners, by His suffering for them on the cross—the complete and perfect sacrifice for sin which He offered up, when He gave His own body to be crucified. In short, this one word, "the cross," stands for Christ crucified, the only Savior. This is the meaning in which Paul uses the expression, when he tells the Corinthians, "the preaching of the cross is to those who perish foolishness." (1 Cor. 1:18.) This is the meaning in which he wrote to the Galatians, "God forbid that I should boast, except in the cross." He simply meant, "I boast in nothing but Christ crucified, as the salvation of my soul."

"By the cross of Christ the Apostle understands the all-sufficient, expiatory, and satisfactory sacrifice of Christ upon the cross, with the whole work of our redemption; in the saving knowledge of whereof he professes he will glory and boasts."—*Cudworth on Galatians.* 1613.

"Touching these words, I do not find that any expositor, either ancient or modern, Popish, or Protestant, writing on this place, does expound the cross here mentioned of the sign of the cross—but of the profession of faith in Him who was hanged on the cross."—*Mayer's Commentary*. 1631.

"This is rather to be understood of the cross which Christ suffered for us, than of that we suffer for Him."—*Leigh's Annotations.* 1650.

Jesus Christ crucified was the joy and delight, the comfort and the peace, the hope and the confidence, the foundation and the resting-place, the ark and the refuge, the food and the medicine of Paul's soul. He did not think of what he had done himself, and suffered himself. He did not meditate on his own goodness, and his own righteousness. He loved to think of what Christ had done, and Christ had suffered—of the death of Christ, the righteousness of Christ, the atonement of Christ, the blood of Christ, the finished work of Christ. In this he did boast. This was the sun of his soul.

This is the subject he loved *to preach about*. He was a man who went to and fro on the earth, proclaiming to sinners that the Son of God had shed His own heart's blood to save their souls. He walked up and down the world telling people that Jesus Christ had loved them, and died for their sins upon the cross. Mark how he says to the Corinthians, "I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins." (1 Cor. 15:3.) "I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." (1 Cor. 2:2.) He, a blaspheming, persecuting Pharisee, had been washed in Christ's blood. He could not hold his peace about it. He was never weary of telling the story of the cross.

This is the subject he loved *to dwell upon when he wrote* to believers. It is wonderful to observe how full his epistles generally are of the sufferings and death of Christ—how they run over with "thoughts that breathe and words that burn," about Christ's dying love and power. His heart seems full of the subject. He enlarges on it constantly—he returns to it continually. It is the golden thread that runs through all his doctrinal teaching and practical exhortations. He seems to think that the most advanced Christian can never hear too much about the cross.

"Christ crucified is the sum of the Gospel, and contains all the riches of it. Paul was so much taken with Christ, that nothing sweeter than Jesus could drop from his pen and lips. It is observed that he has the word "Jesus" five hundred times in his Epistles."—*Charnock*. 1684.

This is what he *lived upon* all his life, from the time of his conversion. He tells the Galatians, "The life that I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." (Galat. 2:20.) What made him so strong to labor? What made him so willing to work? What made him so unwearied in endeavoring to save some? What made him so persevering and patient? I will tell you the secret of it all. He was always feeding by faith on Christ's body and Christ's blood. Jesus crucified was the food and drink of his soul.

And we may rest assured that Paul was right. Depend upon it, **the cross of Christ—the death of Christ on the cross to make atonement for sinners—is the center truth in the whole Bible**. This is the truth we begin with when we open Genesis. The seed of the woman bruising the serpent's head is nothing else but a prophecy of Christ crucified. This is the truth that shines out, though veiled, all through the law of Moses, and the history of the Jews. The daily sacrifice, the passover lamb, the continual shedding of blood in the tabernacle and temple, all these were emblems of Christ crucified. This is the truth that we see honored in the vision of heaven before we close the book of Revelation. "In the midst of the throne and of the four beasts," we are told, "and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain." (Rev. 5:6.) Even in the midst of heavenly glory we get a view of Christ crucified. Take away the cross of Christ, and the Bible is a dark book. It is like the Egyptian hieroglyphics without the key that interprets their meaning—curious and wonderful—but of no real use.

Let every reader of this paper mark what I say. You may know a good deal about the Bible. You may know the outlines of the histories it contains, and the dates of the events described, just as a man knows the history of England. You may know the names of the men and women mentioned in it, just as a man knows Caesar, Alexander the Great, or Napoleon. You may know the several precepts of the Bible, and admire them, just as a man admires Plato, Aristotle, or Seneca. But if you have not yet found out that Christ crucified is the foundation of the whole volume, you have read your Bible hitherto to very little profit. Your religion is a heaven without a sun, an arch without a key-stone, a compass without a needle, a clock without spring or weights, a lamp without oil. It will not comfort you. It will not deliver your soul from hell.

Mark what I say again. You may know a good deal about Christ, by a kind of head knowledge. You may know who He was, and where He was born, and what He did. You may know His miracles, His sayings, His prophecies, and His ordinances. You may know how He lived, and how He suffered, and how He died. But unless you know the power of Christ's cross by experience—unless you know and feel within that the blood shed on that cross has washed away your own particular sins—unless you are willing to confess that your salvation depends entirely on the work that Christ did upon the cross—unless this be the case, Christ will profit you nothing. The mere knowing Christ's name will never save you. You must know His cross, and His blood, or else you will die in your sins.

"If our faith stops in Christ's life, and does not fasten upon His blood, it will not be justifying faith. His miracles, which prepared the world for His doctrines; His holiness, which fitted Himself for His sufferings, had been insufficient for us without the addition of the cross." *Charnock*. 1684.

As long as you live, *beware of a religion in which there is not much of the cross.* You live in times when the warning is sadly needful. Beware, I say again, of a religion without the cross.

There are hundreds of places of worship, in this day, in which there is everything almost except the cross. There is carved oak, and sculptured stone; there is stained glass, and brilliant painting; there are solemn services, and a constant round of ordinances; but the real cross of Christ is not there. Jesus crucified is not proclaimed in the pulpit. The Lamb of God is not lifted up, and salvation by faith in Him is not freely proclaimed. And hence all is wrong. Beware of such places of worship. They are *not apostolic*. They would not have satisfied Paul.

"Paul determined to know nothing else but Jesus Christ and Him crucified. But many manage the ministry as if they had taken up a contrary determination—even to know anything except Jesus Christ and Him crucified."—*Traill*. 1690.

There are thousands of religious books published in our times, in which there is everything except the cross. They are full of directions about sacraments, and praises of the Church. They abound in exhortations about holy living, and rules for the attainment of perfection. They have plenty of fonts and crosses, both inside and outside. But the real cross of Christ is left out. The Savior, and His work of atonement and complete salvation, are either not mentioned, or mentioned in an unscriptural way. And hence they are worse than useless. Beware of such books. They are *not apostolic*. They would never have satisfied Paul.

Paul boasted in nothing but the cross. Strive to be like him. Set Jesus crucified fully before the eyes of your soul. Listen not to any teaching which would interpose anything between you and Him. Do not fall into the old Galatian error—think not that anyone in this day is a better guide than the apostles. Do not be ashamed of the "old paths," in which men walked who were inspired by the Holy Spirit. Let not the vague talk of modern teachers, who speak great swelling words about "catholicity," and "the church," disturb your peace, and make you loose your hands from the cross. Churches, ministers, and sacraments, are all useful in their way—but they are not Christ crucified. Do not give Christ's honor to another. "He who boasts, let him boast in the Lord." (1 Cor. 1:1.)

III. Let me show, lastly, ***why all Christians ought to boast in the cross of Christ.***

I feel that I must say something on this point, because of the ignorance that prevails about it. I suspect that many see no peculiar glory and beauty in the subject of Christ's cross. On the contrary, they think it painful, humbling, and degrading. They do not see much profit in the story of His death and sufferings. They rather turn from it as an unpleasant thing.

Now I believe that such people are quite wrong. I cannot hold with them. I believe it is an excellent thing for us all to be continually dwelling on the cross of Christ. It is a good thing to be often reminded how Jesus was betrayed into the hands of wicked men—how they condemned Him with most unjust judgment—how they spit on Him, scourged Him, beat Him, and crowned Him with thorns—how they led Him forth as a lamb to the slaughter, without His murmuring or resisting—how they drove the nails through His hands and feet, and set Him up on Calvary between two thieves—how they pierced His side with a spear, mocked Him in His sufferings, and let Him hang there naked and bleeding until He died. Of all these things, I say, it is good to be reminded. It is not for nothing that the crucifixion is described four times over in the New Testament. There are very few things that all four writers of the Gospel describe. Generally speaking, if Matthew, Mark, and Luke tell a thing in our Lord's history, John does not tell it. But there is one thing that all the four give us most fully, and that one thing is the story of the cross. This is a telling fact, and not to be overlooked.

People seem to forget that **all Christ's sufferings on the cross were *fore-ordained***. They did not come on Him by chance or accident—they were all planned, counseled, and determined from all eternity. The cross was foreseen in all the provisions of the everlasting Trinity for the salvation of sinners. In the purposes of God the cross was set up from everlasting. Not one throb of pain did Jesus feel, not one precious drop of blood did Jesus shed, which had not been appointed long ago. Infinite wisdom planned that redemption should be by the cross. Infinite wisdom brought Jesus to the cross in due time. He was crucified "by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." (Acts 2:23.)

People seem to forget that **all Christ's sufferings on the cross *were necessary for man's salvation***. He had to bear our sins, if ever they were to be borne at all. With His stripes alone could we be healed. This was the one payment of our debt that God would accept—this was the great sacrifice on which our eternal life depended. If Christ had not gone to the cross and suffered in our stead, the just for the unjust, there would not have been a spark of hope for us. There would have been a mighty gulf between ourselves and God, which no man ever could have passed.

"In Christ's humiliation stands our exaltation; in His weakness stands our strength; in His ignominy our glory; in His death our life."—*Cudworth*. 1613.

"The eye of faith regards Christ sitting on the summit of the cross as in a triumphal chariot; the devil bound to the lowest part of the same cross, and trodden under the feet of Christ."—*Davenant on Colossians*. 1627.

People seem to forget that **all Christ's sufferings were endured *voluntarily***, and of His own free will. He was under no compulsion. Of His own choice He laid down His life—of His own choice He went to the cross in order to finish the work He came to do. He might easily have summoned legions of angels with a word, and scattered Pilate and Herod, and all their armies, like chaff before the wind. But He was a willing sufferer. His heart was set on the salvation of sinners. He was resolved to open "a fountain for all sin and uncleanness," by shedding His own blood. (Zech. 13:1.)

When I think of all this, I see nothing painful or disagreeable in the subject of Christ's cross. On the contrary, I see in it wisdom and power, peace and hope, joy and gladness, comfort and consolation. The more I keep the cross in my mind's eye, the more fullness I seem to discern in it. The longer I dwell on the cross in my thoughts, the more I am satisfied that **there is more to be learned at the foot of the cross than anywhere else in the world**.

(a) Would I know the length and breadth of *God the Father's love* towards a sinful world? Where shall I see it most displayed? Shall I look at His glorious sun, shining down daily on the unthankful and evil? Shall I look at seed-time and harvest, returning in regular yearly succession? Oh, no! I can find a stronger proof of love than anything of this sort. I look at the cross of

Christ. I see in it not the cause of the Father's love—but the effect. There I see that God so loved this wicked world, that He gave His only begotten Son—gave Him to suffer and die—that "whoever believes in Him should not perish—but have eternal life." (John 3:16.) I know that the Father loves us, because He did not withhold from us His Son, His only Son. I might sometimes fancy that God the Father is too high and holy to care for such miserable, corrupt creatures as we are! But I cannot, must not, dare not think it, when I look at the cross of Christ.

"The world we live in would have fallen upon our heads, had it not been upheld by the pillar of the cross; had not Christ stepped in and promised a satisfaction for the sin of man. By this all things consist—not a blessing we enjoy but may put us in mind of it; they were all forfeited by sin—but merited by His blood. If we study it well we shall be sensible how God hated sin and loved a world."—*Charnock.*

(b) Would I know how exceedingly *sinful and abominable sin* is in the sight of God? Where shall I see that most fully brought out? Shall I turn to the history of the flood, and read how sin drowned the world? Shall I go to the shore of the Dead Sea, and mark what sin brought on Sodom and Gomorrah? Shall I turn to the wandering Jews, and observe how sin has scattered them over the face of the earth? No! I can find a clearer proof still! I look at the cross of Christ. There I see that sin is so black and damnable, that nothing but the blood of God's own Son can wash it away. There I see that sin has so separated me from my holy Maker, that all the angels in heaven could never have made peace between us. Nothing could reconcile us, short of the death of Christ. If I listened to the wretched talk of proud people, I might sometimes fancy sin was not so very sinful! But **I cannot think little of sin, when I look at the cross of Christ.**

(c) Would I know the *fullness and completeness of the salvation* God has provided for sinners? Where shall I see it most distinctly? Shall I go to the general declarations in the Bible about God's mercy? Shall I rest in the general truth that God is a "God of love"? Oh, no! I will look at the cross of Christ. I find no evidence like that. I find no balm for a sore conscience and a troubled heart, like the sight of Jesus dying for me on the accursed tree. There I see that a full payment has been made for all my enormous debts. The curse of that law which I have broken has come down on One who there suffered in my stead. The demands of that law are all satisfied. Payment has been made for me, even to the uttermost farthing. It will not be required twice over. Ah, I might sometimes imagine I was too bad to be forgiven! My own heart sometimes whispers that I am too wicked to be saved. But I know in my better moments this is all my foolish unbelief. I read an answer to my doubts in the blood shed on Calvary. I feel sure that there is a way to heaven for the very vilest of people, when I look at the cross.

(d) Would I find strong *reasons for being a holy man?* Where shall I turn for them? Shall I listen to the ten commandments merely? Shall I study the examples given me in the Bible of what grace can do? Shall I meditate on the rewards of heaven, and the punishments of hell? Is there no stronger motive still? Yes! I will look at the cross of Christ! There I see the love of Christ constraining me to "live not unto myself—but unto Him." There I see that I am not my own now—I am "bought with a price." (2 Cor. 5:15; 1 Cor. 6:20.) I am bound by the most solemn obligations to glorify Jesus with body and spirit, which are His. There I see that Jesus gave Himself for me, not only to redeem me from all iniquity—but also to purify me, and to make me one of a "peculiar people, zealous of good works." (Titus 2:14.) He bore my sins in His own body on the tree, "that I being dead unto sin should live unto righteousness." (1 Pet. 2:24.) **There is nothing so sanctifying as a clear view of the cross of Christ! It crucifies the world unto us, and us unto the world. How can we love sin, when we remember that because of our sins Jesus died? Surely none ought to be so holy as the disciples of a crucified Lord.**

(e) Would I *learn how to be contented and cheerful* under all the cares and concerns of life? What school shall I go to? How shall I attain this state of mind most easily? Shall I look at the sovereignty of God, the wisdom of God, the providence of God, the love of God? It is well to do so. But I have a better argument still. I will look at the cross of Christ. I feel that "He who spared not His only-begotten Son—but delivered Him up to die for me, will surely with Him give me all things" that I really need. (Rom. 8:32.) He who endured such agony, sufferings, and pain for my soul, will surely not withhold from me anything that is really good. He who has done the greater things for me, will doubtless do the lesser things also. He who gave His own blood to procure me a home in heaven, will unquestionably supply me with all that is really profitable for me by the way. **There is no school for learning contentment that can be compared with the foot of the cross!**

(f) Would I gather *arguments for hoping that I shall never be cast away?* Where shall I go to find them? Shall I look at my own graces and gifts? Shall I take comfort in my own faith, and love, and penitence, and zeal, and prayer? Shall I turn to my own heart, and say, "this same heart will never be false and cold"? Oh, no! God forbid! I will look at the cross of Christ. This is my grand argument. This is my main stay. I cannot think that He who went through such sufferings to redeem my soul, will let that soul perish after all, when it has once cast itself on Him. Oh, no! what Jesus paid for, Jesus will surely keep. He paid dearly for it. He will not let it easily be lost. He called me to Himself when I was a dark sinner—He will never forsake me after I have believed. When Satan tempts us to doubt whether Christ's people will be kept from falling, we should tell Satan to look at the cross.

"The believer is so freed from eternal wrath, that if Satan and conscience say, 'You are a sinner, and under the curse of the law,' he can say, 'It is true, I am a sinner; but I was hanged on a tree and died, and was made a curse in my Head and Lawgiver Christ, and His payment and suffering is my payment and suffering.'"—*Rutherford's Christ Dying.* 1647.

And now, will you marvel that I said all Christians ought to boast in the cross? Will you not rather wonder that any can hear of the cross and remain unmoved? I declare I know no greater proof of man's depravity, than the fact that thousands of so-called Christians see nothing in the cross. Well may our hearts be called stony—well may the eyes of our mind be called blind—well may our whole nature be called diseased—well may we all be called dead, when the cross of Christ is heard of and yet neglected. Surely we may take up the words of the prophet, and say, "Hear, O heavens, and be astonished O earth; an astounding and a horrible thing is done,"—Christ was crucified for sinners, and yet many Christians live as if He was never crucified at all!

(a) The cross is *the grand peculiarity of the Christian religion.* Other religions have laws and moral precepts, forms and ceremonies, rewards and punishments. But other religions cannot tell us of a dying Savior. They cannot show us the cross. This is the crown and glory of the Gospel. This is that special comfort which belongs to it alone. Miserable indeed is that religious teaching which calls itself Christian, and yet contains nothing of the cross. A man who teaches in this way, might as well profess to explain the solar system, and yet tell his hearers nothing about the sun.

(b) The cross is *the strength of a minister.* I for one would not be without it for all the world. I should feel like a soldier without weapons—like an artist without his brush—like a pilot without his compass—like a laborer without his tools. Let others, if they will, preach the law and morality; let others hold forth the terrors of hell, and the joys of heaven; let others drench their congregations with teachings about the sacraments and the church; give me the cross of Christ! This is the only lever which has ever turned the world upside down hitherto, and made people forsake their sins. And if this will not, nothing will. A man may begin preaching with a perfect knowledge of Latin, Greek, and Hebrew; but he will do little or no good among his hearers unless he knows something of the cross. Never was there a minister who did much for the conversion of souls who did not dwell much on Christ crucified. Luther, Rutherford, Whitefield, M'Cheyne, were all most eminently preachers of the cross. This is the preaching that the Holy Spirit delights to bless. He loves to honor those who honor the cross.

(c) The cross is *the secret of all missionary success.* Nothing but this has ever moved the hearts of the heathen. Just according as this has been lifted up missions have prospered. This is the weapon which has won victories over hearts of every kind, in every quarter of the globe. Greenlanders, Africans, South-Sea Islanders, Hindus, Chinese, all have alike felt its power. Just as that huge iron tube which crosses the Menai Straits, is more affected and bent by half-an-hour's sunshine than by all the dead weight that can be placed in it, so in like manner the hearts of savages have melted before the cross, when every other argument seemed to move them no more than stones. "Brethren," said a North-American Indian after his conversion, "I have been a heathen. I know how heathens think. Once a preacher came and began to explain to us that there was a God; but we told him to return to the place from whence he came. Another preacher came and told us not to lie, nor steal, nor drink; but we did not heed him. At last another came into my hut one day and said, 'I am come to you in the name of the Lord of heaven and earth, He sends to let you know that He will make you happy, and deliver you from misery. For this end He became a man, gave His life a ransom, and shed His blood for sinners.' I could not forget his words. I told them to the other Indians, and an awakening began among us." I say, therefore, preach the sufferings and death of Christ, our Savior, if you wish your words to gain entrance among the heathen. Never indeed did the devil triumph so thoroughly, as when he persuaded the Jesuit missionaries in China to keep back the story of the cross!

(d) The cross is *the foundation of a Church's prosperity.* No Church will ever be honored in which Christ crucified is not continually lifted up—nothing whatever can make up for the lack of the cross. Without it all things may be done decently and in order; without it there may be splendid ceremonies, beautiful music, gorgeous churches, learned ministers, crowded communion tables, huge collections for the poor. But without the cross no good will be done; dark hearts will not be enlightened, proud hearts will not be humbled, mourning hearts will not be comforted, fainting hearts will not be cheered. Sermons about the Church and an apostolic ministry—sermons about baptism and the Lord's supper—sermons about unity and schism—sermons about fasts and communion—sermons about fathers and saints—such sermons will never make up for the absence of sermons about the cross of Christ. They may amuse some—they will feed none. A gorgeous banqueting room, and splendid gold plate on the table, will never make up to a hungry man for the lack of food. Christ crucified is God's ordinance for doing good to people. Whenever a Church keeps back Christ crucified, or puts anything whatever in that foremost place which Christ crucified should always have, from that moment a Church ceases to be useful. Without Christ crucified in her pulpits, a church is little better than a cumberer of the ground, a dead carcase, a well without water, a barren fig tree, a sleeping watchman, a silent trumpet, a speechless witness, an ambassador without terms of peace, a messenger without tidings, a lighthouse without fire, a stumbling-block to weak believers, a comfort to infidels, a hot-bed for formalism, a joy to the devil, and an offence to God.

(e) The cross is *the grand center of union* among true Christians. Our outward differences are many, without doubt. One man is an Episcopalian, another is a Presbyterian—one is an Independent, another a Baptist—one is a Calvinist, another an Arminian—one is a Lutheran, another a Plymouth Brother—one is a friend to Establishments, another a friend to the voluntary system—one is a friend to liturgies, another a friend to extempore prayer. But, after all, what shall we hear about most of these differences, in heaven? Nothing, most probably—nothing at all. *Does a man really and sincerely boast in the cross of Christ?* That is the grand question. If he does, he is my brother—we are traveling on the same road; we are journeying towards a home where Christ is all, and everything outward in religion will be forgotten. But if he does not boast in the cross of Christ, I cannot feel comfort about him. Union on outward points only, is union only for a time—union about the cross is union for eternity. Error on outward points is only a skin-deep disease—error about the cross is disease at the heart. Union about outward points is a mere man-made union—union about the cross of Christ can only be produced by the Holy Spirit.

I know not what you think of all this. I feel as if I had said nothing compared to what might be said. I feel as if the half of what I desire to tell you about the cross were left untold. But I do hope that I have given you something to think about. I do trust that I have shown you that I have reason for the question with which I began this paper, "What do you think and feel about the cross of Christ?" Listen to me now for a few moments, while I say something to **APPLY** the whole subject to your conscience.

(a) *Are you living in any kind of sin?* Are you following the course of this world, and neglecting your soul? Hear, I beseech you, what I say to you this day, "Behold the Cross of Christ." See there how Jesus loved you! See there what Jesus suffered to prepare for you a way of salvation. Yes—careless men and women, for you that blood was shed! For you those hands and feet were pierced with nails! For you that body hung in agony on the cross! You are those whom Jesus loved, and for whom He died! Surely that love ought to melt you. Surely the thought of the cross should draw you to repentance. Oh, that it might be so this very day! Oh, that you would come at once to that Savior who died for you, and is willing to save! Come, and cry to Him with the prayer of faith, and I know that He will listen. Come, and lay hold upon the cross, and I know that He will not cast you out. Come, and believe on Him who died on the cross, and this very day you shall have eternal life. How will you ever escape if you neglect so great salvation? **None surely will be so deep in hell as those who despise the cross!**

(b) *Are you inquiring the way toward heaven?* Are you seeking salvation—but doubtful whether you can find it? Are you desiring to have an interest in Christ—but doubting whether Christ will receive you? To you also I say this day, "Behold the cross of Christ." Here is encouragement if you really want it. Draw near to the Lord Jesus with boldness, for nothing need keep you back. His arms are open to receive you—His heart is full of love towards you. He has made a way by which you may approach Him with confidence. Think of the cross. Draw near, and fear not.

(c) *Are you an unlearned man?* Are you desirous to get to heaven, and perplexed and brought to a stand-still by difficulties in the Bible which you cannot explain? To you also I say this day, "Behold the cross of Christ." Read there the Father's love and the Son's

compassion. Surely they are written in great plain letters, which none can well mistake. What though you are now perplexed by the doctrine of election? What though at present you cannot reconcile your own utter corruption and your own responsibility? Look, I say, at the cross. Does not that cross tell you that Jesus is a mighty, loving, ready Savior? Does it not make one thing plain, and that is that it is all your own fault if you are not saved? Oh, get hold of that truth, and hold it fast!

(d) ***Are you a distressed believer?*** Is your heart pressed down with sickness, tried with disappointments, overburdened with cares? To you also I say this day, "Behold the cross of Christ." Think whose hand it is that chastens you; think whose hand is measuring to you the cup of bitterness which you are now drinking. It is the hand of Him who was crucified! It is the same hand which in love to your soul was nailed to the accursed tree. Surely that thought should comfort and hearten you. Surely you should say to yourself, "A crucified Savior will never lay upon me anything that is not for my good. There is a needs be. It must be well."

(e) ***Are you a believer that longs to be more holy?*** Are you one that finds his heart too ready to love earthly things? To you also I say, "Behold the cross of Christ." Look at the cross, think of the cross, meditate on the cross, and then go and set your affections on the world if you can. I believe that holiness is nowhere learned so well as on Calvary. I believe you cannot look much at the cross without feeling your will sanctified, and your tastes made more spiritual. As the sun gazed upon makes everything else look dark and dim, so does the cross darken the false splendor of this world. As honey tasted makes all other things seem to have no taste at all, so does the cross seen by faith take all the sweetness out of the pleasures of the world. Keep on every day steadily looking at the cross of Christ, and you will soon say of the world, as the poet does—

Its pleasures now no longer please,
No more content afford;
Far from my heart be joys like these,
Now I have seen the Lord.

As by the light of opening day
The stars are all concealed,
So earthly pleasures fade away
When Jesus is revealed.

(f) ***Are you a dying believer?*** Have you gone to that bed from which something within tells you you will never come down alive? Are you drawing near to that solemn hour, when soul and body must part for a season, and you must launch into a world unknown? Oh, look steadily at the cross of Christ by faith, and you shall be kept in peace! Fix the eyes of your mind firmly, not on a man-made crucifix—but on Jesus crucified, and He shall deliver you from all your fears. Though you walk through dark places, He will be with you. He will never leave you—never forsake you. Sit under the shadow of the cross to the very last, and its fruit shall be sweet to your taste. "Ah," said a dying missionary, "there is but one thing needful on a death-bed, and that is to feel one's arms around the cross!"

I lay these thoughts before your mind. What you think now about the cross of Christ, I cannot tell. But I can wish you nothing better than this—that you may be able to say with the Apostle Paul, before you die or meet the Lord, "God forbid that I should boast—except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ!

A Bad Heart

by J. C. Ryle

"The heart is **deceitful** above all things, and it is **desperately wicked**: who can know it? I, the Lord, search the mind, I try the heart, even to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings." (Jeremiah 17:9-10)

The first of these two verses contains a very strong saying, and one which the world in general is not at all disposed to believe. "The heart is deceitful above all things," says our text. "I deny it," says the unconverted man. "To be sure, my heart is very careless and very thoughtless, but it is an honest heart after all." "The heart is desperately wicked," says the text. "Nothing of the sort," replies the sinner. "I know that I neglect the means of grace very much, and perhaps I do not live as I ought to do, but I am sure I have a good heart at the bottom." "Who can know it?" asks the text. "Know it!" we are told: "why, we do not pretend to be such saints as you want men to be, but at any rate we do know our own hearts, we do know what our faults are."

And so, beloved, it appears there are two statements--and one of them must be false. The everlasting Bible is on one side--and human reasoning on the other; God says one thing, and man says another. Now, I shall endeavor to persuade you this morning that the Scripture account of the heart is strictly and literally true and correct; it is a faithful likeness, a lively picture, and it must not be softened down and called figurative and extravagant, because it sounds rough and plain, and leaves you no room for boasting. O that the Holy Spirit may bring many of you to a right understanding of your own hearts! It is almost impossible to say how immensely important it is to have a clear view of their natural state: "with the heart man believes unto righteousness," "out of the heart are the issues of life"; "man looks on the outward appearance—but the Lord looks on the heart."

In short, unless you really know the character of your own heart, you will never value the Gospel as you ought, you will never love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, you will never see how absolutely necessary it was that He should suffer death upon the cross, in order to deliver our souls from hell and bring us unto God. I wish therefore, *firstly*, to prove to you the truth of the words "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked"; *secondly*, I shall say a few words to remind you that God knows what is within you, "I the Lord search the heart"; and, *thirdly*, I shall point out shortly the only remedy that can do you any good, if you would be saved. It is my earnest desire and prayer that you may all come unto Christ and be delivered from the wrath to come; but this will

never be until you are convinced of sin, and you will never be thoroughly convinced until you know that the root and source and fountain of sin all is within you--even in your own hearts!

I. Now, as to the natural deceit and wickedness of every man, woman, and child that is born into the world, first and foremost what says the **Scripture**? How is it written? What do we read? Hear the book of Genesis: "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that *every* imagination of the thoughts of his heart was *only evil continually."* "The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." The first book of Kings: "There is no man that sins not." The book of Psalms: "The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any who did understand and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are altogether become filthy: there is none that does good, no, not one." "The fool has said in his heart, There is no God. Corrupt are they, they have done abominable iniquity, there is none that does good." The book of Job: "How can he be clean, who is born of a woman?" "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one." The book of Proverbs: "Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?" The book of Ecclesiastes: "There is not a just man upon earth, who does good, and sins not." "The heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." "The heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live. The book of Isaiah: "All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned everyone to his own way." "We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." The words of the Lord Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew: "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: these are the things which defile a man." The same words more fully in Mark: "From within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within, and defile a man."

O this pure heart, this good heart which people speak of! These are not texts which describe the character of the wicked only; they are written generally of all mankind, of you and I and the whole world, and they ought to be sufficient proof of that which Solomon declares, "He who trusts his own heart is a fool!"

But perhaps you would like to know what **Bible history** teaches us upon this point: it is possible you may flatter yourselves these are all single texts, and probably do not mean something quite so strong as I have made them appear. Be not deceived; you will find nothing to encourage you to think well of yourself; man's natural character is everywhere described in the same colors—it is all black, very black. Perhaps you sometimes try to think that the Bible is a book which contains the history of many good men, and an account of God's loving-kindness to us, and a great store of good advice. No doubt it does contain all this—but it contains something more too: it contains the true description of man's heart, it strips off the flimsy coverings which pride and self-conceit throw over our natural dispositions, and it shows us man as he really is; it furnishes continual proof from first to last of the inbred wickedness of our hearts, it supplies us with countless examples of our inclination towards sin, unless we are restrained and bent back by the grace of God.

O beloved, that you would only search the Scripture for yourselves on this matter! I am not preaching my own doctrine; I am telling you that plain, humbling truth which the Holy Spirit endeavors in every possible way to drive into our hearts, in that blessed volume which was written for our warning.

You can hardly turn to a single part of Bible history in which this doctrine does not come uppermost. Look at the men **before the flood!** who would have thought, with Paradise as a witness before their eyes (for until the flood, Paradise was on earth), who would have thought they could have turned their backs on God, and given themselves up to all manner of lusts and sin? And yet they did so, in spite of every warning, and God was obliged to drown the whole world, excepting eight people.

Look at men **after the flood!** Doubtless you would expect that everyone would flee from sin as if it were a serpent, remembering God's wrath against iniquity; and yet, behold, the first thing that we meet with is the calling of Abraham and his family to preserve the remembrance of God upon the earth; the whole world had become so sinful and idolatrous, that the Lord Jehovah was obliged to interfere, as it were, in a special manner, and choose out one man's home, that He might not be entirely forgotten. And lest you should imagine things were not so very bad, and this calling of Abraham not so very necessary, the next event we meet with is the destruction of **Sodom and Gomorrah**, because of their abominable wickedness.

Look at the **history of Israel**, the chosen family itself. They went down into Egypt and dwelt there, and two hundred years after they had gone back so far in spiritual things that they had forgotten the name of the God of their fathers. They were brought out by miracles with a mighty hand, and yet they had hardly got into the wilderness when they murmured and desired to return to Egypt. They were taken into the land of Canaan, and had the purest and the best of laws given to them, and yet Joshua was scarcely buried, when they fell away after idols! Time after time you read of their being in hard captivity for their sins, time after time you read of God delivering them; and yet a few short years and it seems to have been all forgotten. The Lord gave them judges and kings, and priests and prophets and ministers, and preachings and warnings; and yet their history, with a few exceptions, is a history of unbelief, and backsliding, and transgression, and crime--down to the very day when they crucified the Lord Jesus Christ Himself!

What can you say to these things? If ever there was a nation free from outward temptation and inducement to sin, it was the Jews; they were hedged in and fenced in on every side by the strictest rules, which prevented them mixing with other nations--and nevertheless you see what they were. You can only account for it by taking the Bible reason: they had the root of all the evil within them, they were men like ourselves, and as such they had hearts deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; and like too many among ourselves they would not believe it--and so they fell.

But I shall not leave the Bible here. I say further that you can hardly turn to a single FAMILY, even of the best of God's servants, in which the natural corruption of our hearts does not appear more or less in some one of the branches. The firstborn in **Adam's** house was Cain, a murderer. The family of **Noah**, that just man, contained Ham, the wicked father of Canaan, the accursed race. **Abraham** was the father of Midian, an idolatrous people who deceived Israel in the wilderness. **Isaac** was the father of Esau, that "profane person." **Jacob** was the father of Reuben, who defiled his father's bed. **Eli**, the priest of the Lord, was the father of Hophni and Phinehas, who made people abhor the offering of God. **David**, the man after God's own heart, was the father of immoral Absalom and Amnon. **Hezekiah**, that good man, was the father of Manasseh, the most wicked of the kings of Judah.

Why am I telling you these things? I tell you them to show you that good education and good example alone, cannot make our children godly--without the grace of God; and to show you how deeply rooted is the corruption of our natural dispositions!

But I shall go even further. I say that you can hardly turn to a single CHARACTER, among the holy men described in the Bible, who did not, to his own horror and dismay, fall at one time or another. **Noah** planted a vineyard, and was one day found drunken. **David** committed adultery with the wife of Uriah. **Peter** denied his Lord thrice. What does this prove? It proves beyond a question that the most excellent of the earth have found that the root of all their sinfulness is within them; they never boasted of the purity or goodness of their hearts, they have all placed upon record the truth that, although Satan does much and the world does much, still after all **the great enemy is always within us!** It is a heart deceitful above all things and desperately wicked! Pause, beloved, for an instant, and think of that: the men who were the friends of God, who lived most closely to Him, were those whom we find grieving and mourning over their sinful hearts most bitterly. Surely the heart must be more treacherous than you supposed!

Well, perhaps you will say, all this may be very true; the men we read of in the Bible certainly sinned very much; but things are altered now, we live under the light of the Gospel. Things may be altered certainly in some respects—but the heart is just the same. I cannot see the smallest proof of any change there. So long as every newspaper contains accounts of crime in one shape or another of all descriptions; so long as jails and prisons are full and new ones are continually being built; so long as hundreds and thousands are every year tried and punished, and yet next year there are as many more committed; so long as men make an idol of money, and swear and ask God to damn their souls, and break the Sabbath day in every possible manner, and show an utter lack of affection and kindness to their own relations, and are angry and passionate on the slightest occasion, and think very lightly about immorality, and think it clever and fair to deceive their neighbors, and do not hesitate to say what is not true if it serves their interest, and covet each other's money and house and land and property from morning until night, and get drunk, as if they gloried in ruining soul and body at once—so long, I say, as such things go on in England, which professes to be a Christian country—and you know they do go on—so long as such things go on in the face of God who sees it all, and the Bible which condemns it all, and the Church which witnesses against it all; so long shall I declare that the only possible reason which can be given for it is the plain account of my text: "The natural heart of every man is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked!" There must be some hidden cause and fountain of sin within us—or men would never be guilty of such enormous folly!

But I will not detain you with proofs of this nature, which you must all know. I would rather lay before you a few questions which perhaps many of you have not considered.

What, then, is the reason that men are so active and industrious in their business--and so careless about their souls? They give up their whole heart and soul and mind to their laboring and planting and building and gardening; they rise early and go to bed late; they bestir themselves; they are in earnest; they think it wrong not to be diligent and hardworking. But as for serving God, they seem to think it their duty to sit still and do nothing.

What is the reason that men have always so many excuses to make in the service of God? The most ridiculous, the most trifling seem to satisfy them--and yet they know that if they gave such excuses to an earthly master, they would be dismissed at once from his employment.

What is the reason that men pay such respect to those above them upon earth? Their landlord, their master, the rich and the noble, are always treated with a proper reverence and deference; and yet the Lord God Almighty, the Maker and the Judge of all things, is honored when it is convenient, as if it was rather a favor to attend His house and hear His ministers. What is the reason that men can give smooth names and soften down practices which God detests, and talk of an adulterer as a mirthful man; and a drunkard as a merry, cheerful man; and a riotous reveler as a happy man; while one who is striving to lay hold on Christ is called a fool; and one who has a tender conscience is called narrow-minded; and one who thirsts after holiness is called a pious bigot?

What is the reason that many can talk much and show much knowledge about this world's matters—but are unconcerned and silent and ignorant about their souls? What is the reason that many can remember everything bad which they meet with—but forget the good? What is the reason that many can hear of others dying, and never look at their own state? What is the reason that many can see death coming near their own doors, and yet neglect to make preparations to receive him?

Beloved, these things are astonishing—but are they not true? Man, so wise, so prudent, so thoughtful as he is about the present life--seems a fool in the matter of the world to come. And why? "He has within him a heart deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked."

And what is the reason that men who profess and call themselves Christians often find fault with the doctrines they hear preached, and say they must be wrong, they cannot be the truth of God, they are too humbling, too strict: and yet they will not take the trouble of looking at their Bibles, to see whether these things be really so.

What is the reason that so many go on saying they **know** all these things--and yet they never **do** them? They are almost ready to take offence if we doubt their acquaintance with the Gospel—but there they stop, their knowledge does not seem to make the slightest difference in their lives.

What is the reason that so many use the outward forms of religion but never pray in secret? I know that certain of you did not pray last night nor yet this morning. What is the reason that so many hear the Gospel preached week after week and never apply it to themselves, and go away from church as cold and unmoved as if they had gone to be witnesses of instruction given to their neighbours—but not meant for themselves?

What is the reason that so many encourage themselves with the idea it will be all right at the last, and yet they cannot say why; and so many make a great profession, and try to deceive ministers, as if God did not see it all; and so many desire to have the name of spiritual Christians on earth, who clearly are not bearing the Cross nor showing the mind that was in Christ Jesus?

Truly, beloved, there is but one reason to be given, and that is the Bible reason. Conduct such as I have described—and you know I have mentioned matters of everyday occurrence—such conduct is so utterly unlike the way in which men act about the care of their bodies and the things of this world, that there must be some hidden reason, some secret fountain of evil within us. I say it is impossible to observe how differently men generally live from the plain precepts of the Bible; it is impossible to consider the number and the variety of the ways in which God's law is continually broken, and not to see the most decided proof that man's natural heart is indeed

deceitful above all things and desperately wicked!

Truly indeed were the words added, "Who can know it?" Who can ever understand how men can shut their eyes against such light, and live after such a fashion as too many do? **Job** thought he knew his heart—but affliction came and he found he did not. **David** thought he knew his heart—but he learned by bitter experience how woefully he was mistaken. **Peter** thought he knew his heart, and in a short time he was repenting in tears. Oh, pray, beloved, if you love your souls, for some insight into your own corruption; the truest saints of God do never quite discover the exceeding sinfulness of that old man which is in them.

II. I promised to say a few words about the second part of my text—but I shall not detain you long over it. We read, **"I the Lord search the mind, I try the heart, even to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings."** There are two things written here. One is that, although you do not know your own hearts, the Lord God Almighty does, and keeps a close watch over them. The other is that He will one day call you to account, and judge you accordingly. And do you not observe here what the mind of the Spirit points to? Some men might say, God will not be extreme to mark what is amiss, I shall have peace though I walk in the imagination of my heart—but the prophet sweeps away these refuges of lies by warning us of searching and of judgment immediately after he has declared to us the deceitfulness of man's heart.

Remember, now, O unconverted man, that God has set your secret sins in the light of His countenance; the vilest imaginations of your wicked heart, the deeds you have so carefully concealed from the sight of men, the abominable thoughts which you would not have your dearest friends suspect—all have been seen through and through by that Pure and Holy One who will one day be your Judge. Remember that the wrath of God is revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; that the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the people, too, who forget God, and neglect so great salvation; that hell is everlasting woe: ten thousand times ten thousand years shall pass away, and the worm and the fire shall be just the same, and this is the place to which you are going!

You do not like to believe the account we have given of your natural heart—but look back over your life and tell us of one single day in which you have done all that God required and left nothing undone: you cannot find it; and what will you do when each of the three hundred and sixty-five days in each of the twenty, forty, sixty years you may have lived shall come to light, when thousands of little sins you now forget shall all appear, and God shall ask you, "What have you got to say, why these things should not condemn you?" Oh, be not deceived—but bear in mind that James has said one single offence will make you guilty, that Jesus teaches that in God's account--a thought or a feeling is as bad as an outward act, that one lustful look is adultery, and that hatred is murder. Better be humble now and confess you did not know your own vileness--than flatter your vanity and self-conceit, and perish everlastingly!

III. Beloved, you are feeling disposed to say, **"At this rate, who can be saved?"** and I shall endeavor to give you very shortly the Bible answer; I shall try to point out the way. Truly on any earthly scheme, salvation would be impossible—but with God all things are possible, and God has laid before us **a path by which the vilest may get to heaven!** You are thinking that I have gone too far, that I have spoken too strongly—but you cannot say that I have gone beyond the Bible, nor yet beyond the Prayer-book, which you have used today and called yourselves miserable sinners.

I say, then, O you miserable sinners, although your hearts are deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, although there is no spiritual health in you--I say that God loves sinners exceedingly. He has given His only-begotten Son to suffer for your sins; and now whoever believes in Him shall not perish, shall not be condemned, shall have everlasting life. "Who can be saved?" All, I answer, who give up their iniquities, and grieve over them, and put their whole trust in Jesus Christ. But these deceitful hearts? Repent and believe, and God shall wash them in the blood of the cross, shall make them as it were new, shall create them again in righteousness and true holiness; shall fill them with the Holy Spirit; shall put love where there was hatred or indifference; shall put peace where there was doubt and anxiety; shall put strength where there was wickedness. Verily your sin does indeed abound—but you shall find, if you will only try it, that grace does abound far more.

O you miserable sinners, who are just now thinking well of your own state, and not alarmed about your souls, and rather offended at the picture I have drawn of your hearts—I ought to say our hearts, for my heart is naturally just as abominable as your own—O you miserable sinners, I do beseech you to pray God that you may see clearly the corruption of your nature! I tell the **young** among you, your hearts are desperately wicked, and so long as you put off repentance and calling upon God, you are like an infant trifling with a razor—you are like a fool playing with a tiger.

I tell those among you who are getting on in life, your hearts are desperately wicked, and so long as you hold back and talk of a more convenient season for coming unto Christ, you are adding stone to stone and brick to brick to that great wall which you have built up between yourselves and the Kingdom of Heaven. Your hearts are deceitful above all things, and except they be changed, the Bible says you will most surely perish. But in the name of my most loving Master I offer to you a complete remedy! I proclaim to you the freest salvation. I entreat you not to reject it. Come unto Jesus! He came not to save the wise in their own eyes—but to seek those who are lost. Come unto the Lamb of God! He takes away the sins of the world! And though your hearts be full of iniquity they shall be changed, "though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall become as wool."

But mark my words: God has witnessed that except you choose this way, the way of repentance and of faith, you shall have no salvation, and the more free and gracious are the offers which you reject, so much the more heavily shall you be judged in the last day. "O seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near! Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon!"

Christ Crucified

J. C. Ryle

There is no doctrine in Christianity so important as the doctrine of Christ crucified. There is none which the devil tries so hard to destroy. There is none which it is so needful for our own peace to understand.

By "Christ crucified," I mean the doctrine that Christ suffered death on the cross to make atonement for our sins—that by His death He made a full, perfect, and complete satisfaction to God for the ungodly—and that through the merits of that death all who believe in Him are forgiven all their sins, however many and great, entirely, and forever. About this blessed doctrine let me say a few words.

The doctrine of Christ crucified is the grand peculiarity of the Christian religion. Other religions have laws and moral precepts, forms and ceremonies, rewards and punishments; but other religions cannot tell us of a dying Savior: they cannot show us the cross. This is the crown and glory of the Gospel; this is that special comfort which belongs to it alone. Miserable indeed is that religious teaching which calls itself Christian, and yet contains nothing of the cross. A man who teaches in this way might as well profess to explain the solar system, and yet tell his hearers nothing about the sun.

The doctrine of Christ crucified is the strength of a minister. I for one would not be without it for all the world. I would feel like a soldier without arms, like an artist without his pencil, like a pilot without his compass, like a laborer without his tools. Let others, if they will, preach the law and morality; let others hold forth the terrors of hell, and the joys of heaven; let others dwell on the sacraments and the Church: give me *the cross of Christ. This is the only lever which has ever turned the world upside down hitherto, and made men forsake their sins: and if this will not, nothing will.*

A man may begin preaching with a perfect knowledge of Latin, Greek, and Hebrew; but he will do little or no good among his hearers unless he knows something of the cross. Never was there a minister who did much for the conversion of souls who did not dwell much on Christ crucified. Luther, Rutherford, Whitfield, McCheyne, were all most eminently preachers of the cross. This is the preaching that the Holy Spirit delights to bless: He loves to honor those who honor the cross. The doctrine of Christ crucified is the secret of all missionary success. Nothing but this has ever moved the hearts of the heathen. Just according as this has been lifted up missions have prospered. This is the weapon that has won victories over hearts of every kind, in every quarter of the globe: Greenlanders, Africans, South Sea Islanders, Hindoos, and Chinese, all have alike felt its power. Just as that huge iron tube which crosses the Menai Straits is more affected and bent by half an hour's sunshine than by all the dead weight that can be placed in it, so in like manner the hearts of savages have melted before the cross, when every other argument seemed to move them no more than stones.

"Brethren," said a North American Indian after his conversion, "I have been a heathen. I know how heathens think. Once a preacher came and began to explain to us that there was a God; but we told him to return to the place from where he came. Another preacher came and told us not to lie, nor steal, nor drink; but we did not heed him. At last another came into my hut one day, and said, 'I am come to you in the name of the Lord of heaven and earth. He sends to let you know that He will make you happy, and deliver you from misery. For this end He became a man, gave His life a ransom, and shed His blood for sinners. I could not forget his words. I told them to the other Indians, and an awakening begun among us. I say, therefore, preach the sufferings and death of Christ, our Savior, if you wish your words to gain entrance among the heathen."

Never indeed did the devil triumph so thoroughly as when he persuaded the Jesuit missionaries in China to keep back the story of the cross! The doctrine of Christ crucified is the foundation of a Church's prosperity. No Church will ever be honored in which Christ crucified is not continually lifted up. Nothing whatever can make up for the lack of the cross. Without it all things may be done decently and in order; without it there may be splendid ceremonies, beautiful music, gorgeous churches, learned ministers, crowded communion tables, huge collections for the poor; but without the cross no good will be done. Dark hearts will not be enlightened, proud hearts will not be humbled, mourning hearts will not be comforted, fainting hearts will not be cheered. Sermons about the catholic church and an apostolic ministry, sermons about baptism and the Lord's supper, sermons about unity and schism, sermons about fasts and communion, sermons about fathers and saints—such sermons will never make up for the absence of sermons about the cross of Christ. They may amuse some, they will feed none. A gorgeous banqueting room, and splendid gold plate on the table, will never make up to a hungry man for the lack of food.

Christ crucified is God's grand ordinance for doing good to men. Whenever a Church keeps back Christ crucified, or puts anything whatever in that foremost place which Christ crucified should always have, from that moment a Church ceases to be useful. Without Christ crucified in her pulpits, a Church is little better than a cumberer of the ground, a dead carcass, a well without water, a barren fig-tree, a sleeping watchman, a silent trumpet, a dumb witness, an ambassador without terms of peace, a messenger without tidings, a lighthouse without fire, a stumbling-block to weak believers, a comfort to infidels, a hot-bed for formalism, a joy to the devil, and an offence to God.

The doctrine of Christ crucified is the grand center of union among true Christians. Our outward differences are many without doubt: one man is an Episcopalian, another is a Presbyterian; one is an Independent, another a Baptist; one is a Calvinist, another an Arminian; one is a Lutheran, another a Plymouth Brother; one is a friend to Establishments, another a friend to the Voluntary system; one is a friend to Liturgies, another a friend to extempore prayer: but after all, what shall we hear about most of these differences in heaven? Nothing, most probably: nothing at all. Does a man really and sincerely glory in the cross of Christ? That is the grand question. If he does, he is my brother: we are traveling in the same road; we are journeying towards a home where Christ is all, and everything outward in religion will be forgotten. But if he does not glory in the cross of Christ, I cannot feel comfort about him. Union on outward points only is union only for time: union about the cross is union for eternity. Error on outward points is only a skin-deep disease: error about the cross is disease at the heart. Union about outward points is a mere man-made union: union about the cross of Christ can only be produced by the Holy Spirit.

Reader, I know not what you think of all this. I feel as if the half of what I desire to tell you about Christ crucified were left untold. But I do hope that I have given you something to think about. Listen to me now for a few moments, while I say something to apply

the whole subject to your conscience.

Are you living in any kind of sin? Are you following the course of this world, and neglecting your soul? Hear! I beseech you, what I say to you this day: "Behold the cross of Christ." See there how Jesus loved you! See there what Jesus suffered to prepare for you a way of salvation! Yes: careless men and women, for you that blood was shed! for you those hands and feet were pierced with nails! for you that body hung in agony on the cross! You are those whom Jesus loved, and for whom He died! Surely that love ought to melt you: surely the thought of the cross should draw you to repentance. Oh, that it might be so this very day! Oh, that you would come at once to that Savior who died for you and is willing to save! Come and cry to Him with the prayer of faith, and I know that He will listen. Come and lay hold upon the cross, and I know that He will not cast you out. Come and believe on Him who died on the cross, and this very day you shall have eternal life. Are you inquiring the way toward heaven? Are you seeking salvation, but doubtful whether you can find it? Are you desiring to have an interest in Christ, but doubting whether Christ will receive you? To you also I say this day, "Behold the cross of Christ."

Here is encouragement if you really want it. Draw near to the Lord Jesus with boldness, for nothing need keep you back: His arms are open to receive you; His heart is full of love towards you. He has made a way by which you may approach Him with confidence. Think of the cross. Draw near, and fear not. Are you an unlearned man? Are you desirous to get to heaven, and yet perplexed and brought to a stand-still by difficulties in the Bible that you cannot explain? To you also I say this day, "Behold the cross of Christ." Read there the Father's love and the Son's compassion. Surely they are written in great plain letters, which none can well mistake. What though you are now perplexed by the doctrine of election? What though at present you cannot reconcile your own utter corruption and your own responsibility? Look, I say, at the cross. Does not that cross tell you that Jesus is a mighty, loving, ready Savior? Does it not make one thing plain—and that is that if not saved it is all your own fault? Oh, get hold of that truth, and hold it fast!

Are you a *distressed* believer? Is your heart pressed down with sickness, tried with disappointments, overburdened with cares? To you also I say this day, "Behold the cross of Christ." Think whose hand it is that chastens you: think whose hand is measuring to you the cup of bitterness which you are now drinking. It is the hand of Him that was crucified: it is the same hand that in love to your soul was nailed to the accursed tree. Surely that thought should comfort and hearten you. Surely you should say to yourself, "A crucified Savior will never lay upon me anything that is not good for me. There is a needs be. It must be well."

Are you a *dying* believer? Have you gone to that bed from which something within tells you you will never come down alive? Are you drawing near to that solemn hour when soul and body must part for a season, and you must launch into a world unknown? Oh, look steadily at the cross of Christ, and you shall be kept in peace! Fix the eyes of your mind firmly on Jesus crucified, and He shall deliver you from all your fears. Though you walk through dark places, He will be with you: He will never leave you—never forsake you. Sit under the shadow of the cross to the very last, and its fruits shall be sweet to your taste. There is but one thing needful on a death-bed, and that is to feel one's arms around the cross. Reader, if you never heard of Christ crucified before this day, I can wish you nothing better than that you may know Him by faith, and rest on Him for salvation. If you do know Him may you know Him better every year you live, until you see Him face to face

What is Your Hope?

by J. C. Ryle

Reader, what is your hope about your soul? Have you any, or have you none? Can you tell me in what way you expect to be accounted righteousness before God?:

Depend upon it, these are very serious questions. You and I are *dying men*. After death comes the judgment. What is your hope of acquittal in that solemn day? What are we going to plead on our behalf before God?

Shall we say that we have done our duty to God? Shall we say that we have done our duty to our neighbor? Shall we bring forward our prayers, our good works, our morality, our church going, our amendments? Shall we ask to be accepted by God for any of these things?

Which of these things will stand God's eye? Which of them will actually justify you and me? Which of them will carry us clear through judgment, and land us safe in glory?

Absolutely none! Take any commandment of the ten, and let us examine ourselves by it. We have broken it repeatedly. We cannot answer God. Take any of us, and look narrowly into our ways—and we are nothing but sinners. There is but one verdict. We are all guilty—we all ought to die—we all deserve hell. How then can we come before God?

We must come in the Name of Jesus, standing on no other ground, pleading no other plea than this, "Christ died on the cross for the ungodly—and I trust in Him."

Oh, believe me, Christ must be all the hope of everyone who would be justified and saved. You must be content to go to heaven as a beggar—saved by *free grace* alone—simply as a believer in Jesus—or you will never be saved at all. "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast!" Ephesians 2:8-9

OUR HOPE!

by J. C. Ryle, 1877

"Good hope through grace." 2 Thess. 2:10

"The hope of the ungodly shall perish." Job 8:13

"For what is the hope of the godless, when he is cut off, when God takes away his life?" Job 27:8

"I hope," is a very common expression. Everybody can say, "I hope." About no subject is the expression used so commonly as it is about religion. Nothing is more common than to hear people turn off some home-thrust at conscience, by this convenient form of words, "I hope." "I hope it will be all right at last." "I hope I shall be a better man some day." "I hope I shall get to heaven at last." But why do they hope? On what is their hope built? Too often they cannot tell you! Too often it is a mere excuse for avoiding a disagreeable subject. "Hoping," they live on. "Hoping," they grow old. "Hoping," they die at last—and find too often that they are lost forever in hell!

I ask the serious attention of all who read this paper. The subject is one of the deepest importance, "We are saved by hope." (Rom. 8:24.) Let us, then, make sure that our hope is sound. Have we a hope that our sins are pardoned, our hearts renewed, and our souls at peace with God? Then let us see to it that our hope is "good," and "living," and one "that makes not ashamed." (2 Thess. 2:16; 1 Pet, 1:3; Rom. 5:5.) Let us consider our ways. Let us not shrink from honest, searching inquiry into the condition of our souls. If our hope is good, examination will do it no harm. If our hope is bad, it is high time to know it, and to seek a better one.

There are five marks of a really "good hope." I desire to place them before my readers in order. Let us ask ourselves what we know of them. Let us prove our own state by them. Happy is he who can say of each of these marks, "I know it by experience. This is my hope about my soul."

I. In the first place, **a good hope is a hope that a man can explain.** What says the Scripture? "Be ready always to give an answer to every man who asks you a reason of the hope that is in you." (1 Pet. 3:15.)

If our hope is sound we must be able to give some account of it. We must be able to show why, and therefore, and on what grounds, and for what reason we expect to go to heaven when we die. Now can we do this?

Let no one misunderstand my meaning. I do not say that deep learning and great *knowledge* are absolutely needful to salvation. A man may know twenty languages, and have the whole body of divinity at his fingers' ends, and yet be lost; a man may be unable to read, and have a very weak understanding, and yet be saved. But I do say that a man must know *what* his hope is, and be able to tell us its nature. I cannot believe that a man has got possession of a thing if he knows nothing about it.

Once more, let no one misunderstand my meaning. I do not say that a power of *talking* well is necessary to salvation. There may be many fine words on a man's lips, and not a whit of grace in his heart; there may be few and stammering words, and yet deep feeling within, planted there by the Holy Spirit. There are some who cannot speak many words for Christ, and yet would die for Him. But for all this, I do say that the man who has a good hope ought to be able to tell us why. If he can tell us no more than this, that "he feels himself a sinner, and has no hope but in Christ," it is something. But if he can tell us nothing at all, I must suspect that he has got no real hope.

I am aware that the opinion just expressed displeases many. Thousands can see no necessity for that clear knowledge which I believe to be essential to a saving hope. So long as a man goes to church on Sunday, and has his children baptized, they think we ought to be content. "Knowledge," they tell us, "may be very well for clergymen and professors of theology; but it is too much to require it of common people."

My answer to all such people is short and simple. Where in the whole New Testament shall we find that people were called Christians, unless they knew something of Christianity? Will anyone try to persuade me that a Corinthian Christian, or a Colossian, or Thessalonian, or Philippian, or Ephesian, could not have told us what was his hope about his soul? Let those believe it who will—I, for one, cannot. I believe that in requiring a man to know the ground of his hope I am only setting up the standard of the New Testament. Ignorance may suit a Roman Catholic well enough. He belongs to what he considers to be the true Church! He does as his priest tells him! He asks no more! But ignorance ought never to be the characteristic of a Christian. He ought to know what he believes, and if he does not know he is in a bad way.

I ask every reader of this paper to search his heart, and see how the matter stands with his soul. Can you tell us nothing more than this, that "you hope to be saved"? Can you give no explanation of the grounds of your confidence? Can you show us nothing more satisfactory than your own vague expectation? If this be the case you are in imminent peril of being lost forever. Like Ignorance, in Pilgrim's Progress, you may get to your journey's end, and be ferried by Vainhope over the river, without much trouble. But, like Ignorance, you may find to your sorrow that there is no admission for you into the celestial city. None enter in there but those who "know what as well as whom they have believed."

"Now, while I was gazing upon all these things, I turned my head to look back, and saw Ignorance coming up to the riverside—but he soon got over, and that without half the difficulty which the other two men met with. For it happened that there was then in that place one Vainhope, a ferry-man, that with his boat helped him over; so he, as the other I saw, did ascend the hill to come up to the gate, only he came alone; neither did any man meet him with the least encouragement. When he was come up to the gate, he looked up to the writing that was above, and then began to knock, supposing that entrance should have been quickly administered to him. But he was asked by the man that looked over the top of the gate, 'Whence come you? And what would you have?' He answered, 'I have ate and drank in the presence of the King, and He has taught in our streets.' Then they asked him for his certificate, that they might go in and show it to the King. So he fumbled in his bosom for one, and found none. Then said they, 'Have you none?' But the man answered never a word.

"So they told the King; but He would not come down to see him—but commanded the two shining ones that conducted Christian and Hopeful to the City, to take Ignorance and bind him hand and foot, and take him away. Then they took him up, and carried him through the air to the door that I saw in the side of the hill, and put him in there. Then I saw that there was a way to hell, even from

the gate of heaven, as well as from the city of destruction."—*Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress.*

I lay down this principle as a starting point, and I ask my readers to consider it well. I admit most fully that there are different degrees of grace among true Christians. I do not forget that there are many in the family of God whose faith is very weak, and whose hope is very small. But I believe confidently, that the standard of requirement I have set up, is not a whit too high. I believe that the man who has a "good hope" will always be able to give some account of it.

II. In the second place, **a good hope is a hope that is drawn from Scripture.** What says David? "I hope in Your word." "Remember the word unto Your servant, upon which You have caused me to hope." What says Paul? "Whatever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope." (Psalm 119:81, 49. Rom. 15:4.)

If our hope is sound we ought to be able to turn to some text, or fact, or doctrine of God's Word, as the source of it. Our confidence must arise from something which God has caused to be written in the Bible for our learning, and which our heart has received and believed.

It is not enough to have *good feelings* about the state of our souls. We may flatter ourselves that all is right, and that we are going to heaven when we die, and yet have nothing to show for our expectations but mere fancy and imagination. "The heart is deceitful above all things." "He who trusts in his own heart is a fool." (Jer. 17:9. Prov. 28:26.) I have frequently heard dying people say that "they felt quite happy and ready to go." I have heard them say that "they felt as if they craved nothing in this world." And all this time I have remarked that they were profoundly ignorant of Scripture, and seemed unable to lay firm hold on a single truth of the Gospel! I never can feel comfort about such people. I am persuaded that there is something wrong in their condition. Good feelings, without some warrant of Scripture, do not make up a good hope.

It is not enough to have the *good opinion of others* about the state of our souls. We may be told by others on our death beds, to "keep up our spirits," and "not to be afraid." We may be reminded that we have "lived good lives—or had a good heart—or done nobody any harm—or not been so bad as many." And all this time our friends may not bring forward a word of Scripture, and may be feeding us poison! Such friends are miserable comforters. However well meaning, they are downright enemies to our souls. The good opinion of others, without the warrant of God's Word, will never make up a good hope.

If a man would know the soundness of his own hope, let him search and look within his heart for some text or doctrine, or fact out of God's book. There will always be some one or more on which your soul hangs, if you are a true child of God. The dying thief in London, who was visited by a City Missionary, and found utterly ignorant of Christianity, laid hold on one single fact in a chapter of Luke's Gospel which was read to him, and found comfort in it. That fact was the story of the penitent thief. "Sir," he said, when visited the second time, "are there any more thieves in that book from which you read yesterday?" The dying Hindu who was found by a missionary on a roadside, had grasped one single text in the First Epistle of John, and found in it peace. That text was the precious saying, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son, CLEANSES us from all sin." (1 John 1:7.) This is the experience of all true Christians. Unlearned, humble, poor, as many of them are, they have got hold of something in the Bible, and this causes them to hope. The hope which "takes not ashamed" is never separate from God's Word.

People wonder sometimes that ministers press them so strongly to read the Bible. They marvel that we say so much about the importance of preaching, and urge them so often to hear sermons. Let them cease to wonder, and marvel no more. Our object is to make you acquainted with God's Word. We want you to have a good hope, and we know that a good hope must be drawn from the Scriptures. Without reading or hearing you must live and die in ignorance. Hence we cry, "Search the Scriptures." "Hear, and your soul shall live." (John 5:39. Isa. 55:3.)

I warn everyone to beware of a hope not drawn from Scripture. It is a false hope, and many will find out this to their cost. That glorious and perfect book, the Bible, however people despise it, is the only fountain out of which man's soul can derive peace. Many sneer at the old book while living, who find their need of it when dying. The Queen in her palace and the pauper in the workhouse, the philosopher in his study and the child in the cottage—each and all must be content to seek living water from the Bible, if they are to have any hope at all. Honor your Bible—read your Bible—stick to your Bible. There is not on earth a scrap of solid hope for the other side of the grave which is not drawn out of the Word.

III. In the third place, **a good hope is a hope that rests entirely on Jesus Christ.** What says Paul to Timothy? He says that Jesus Christ "is our hope." What says he to the Colossians? He speaks of "Christ in you the hope of glory." (1 Tim. 1:1; Coloss. 1:27.)

The person who has a good hope founds all his expectations of pardon and salvation on the mediation and redeeming work of Jesus, the Son of God. He knows his own sinfulness; he feels that he is guilty, wicked, and lost by nature—but he sees forgiveness and peace with God offered freely to him through faith in Christ. He accepts the offer—he casts himself with all his sins on Jesus, and rests on Him. Jesus and His atonement on the cross—Jesus and His righteousness—Jesus and His finished work—Jesus and His all-prevailing intercession—Jesus, and Jesus only, is the foundation of the confidence of his soul.

Let us beware of supposing that any hope is good which is not founded on Christ. All other hopes are built on sand. They may look well in the summer time of health and prosperity—but they will fail in the day of sickness and the hour of death. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." (1 Cor. 3:11.)

Church-membership is no foundation of hope. We may belong to the best of Churches, and yet never belong to Christ. We may fill our pew regularly every Sunday, and hear the sermons of orthodox, ordained clergymen, and yet never hear the voice of Jesus, or follow Him. If we have nothing better than Church-membership to rest upon we are in a poor plight—we have nothing solid beneath our feet.

Reception of the sacraments is no foundation of hope. We may be washed in the waters of baptism, and yet know nothing of the water of life. We may go to the Lord's table every Sunday of our lives, and yet never eat Christ's body and drink Christ's blood by faith. Miserable indeed is our condition if we can say nothing more than this! We possess nothing but the outside of Christianity—we are leaning on a reed.

Christ Himself is the only true foundation of a good hope. He is the rock, His work is perfect. He is the stone—the sure stone, the tried corner-stone. He is able to bear all the weight that we can lay upon Him. He only that builds and "believes on Him shall not be confounded." (Deut. 32:4; Isa. 28:16; 1 Peter 2:6.)

This is the point on which all true saints of God in every age have been entirely agreed. Differing on other matters, they have always been of one mind upon this. Unable to see alike about Church-government, and discipline, and liturgies, they have ever seen alike about the foundation of hope. Not one of them has ever left the world trusting in his own righteousness. Christ has been all their confidence—they have hoped in Him, and not been ashamed.

"Consider how it is with the most holy and eminent saints when dying. Did you ever see or hear any boasting of their own works and performances? They may, and do own to the praise of His grace, what they have been made to be, what they have been helped to do or allow for Christ's sake. But when they draw near to the solemn tribunal, what else is in their eye and heart—but only free grace, ransoming blood, and a well-ordered covenant in Christ the surety? They cannot bear to have any make mention to them of their holiness, their own grace, and attainments.

"He is a wise and happy man that can anchor his soul on that rock on which he can ride out the storm of death. Why should people contend for that in their life that they know they must renounce at their death? or neglect that truth now, that they must betake themselves unto then? It is a great test of the truth of the doctrine about the way of salvation when it is generally approved by sensible dying people."—*Traill.*

Would anyone like to know what kind of death-beds a minister of the Gospel finds comfort in attending? Would you know what closing scenes are cheering to us, and leave favorable impressions on our minds? We like to see dying people making much of Christ. So long as they can only talk of "the Almighty," and "Providence," and "God," and "mercy," we must stand in doubt. Dying in this state, they give no satisfactory sign. Give us the men and women who feel their sins deeply, and cling to Jesus, who think much of His dying love—who like to hear of His atoning blood—who return again and again for the story of His cross. These are the death-beds which leave good evidence behind them. For my part I had rather hear the name of Jesus come heartily from a dying relative's lips, than see him die without a word about Christ, and then be told by an angel that he was saved.

The dying words of Mr. Ash, the Puritan, are well-deserving of notice. He said, "When I consider my best duties, I sink, I die, I despair. But when I think of Christ, I have enough. He is all and in all.'

The words of Mr. Cecil shortly before his death are very remarkable. He said, "I know myself to be a wretched, worthless sinner, having nothing in myself but poverty and sin. I know Jesus Christ to be a glorious and almighty Savior. I see the full efficacy of His atonement and grace; and I cast myself entirely on Him, and wait at His footstool." A short time before his decease he requested one of his family to write down for him the following sentence in a book, "'None but Christ, none but Christ,' said Lambert, dying at a stake—the same in dying circumstances, with his whole heart, says Richard Cecil."

IV. In the fourth place, **a good hope is a hope that is felt inwardly in the heart.** What says Paul? He speaks of "hope that makes not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts." He speaks of "rejoicing in hope." (Rom. 5:5; 12:12.)

The man who has a good hope is conscious of it. He feels within him something that another man does not—he is conscious of possessing a well-grounded expectation of good things to come. This consciousness may vary exceedingly in different people. In one it may be strong and well-defined; in another it may be feeble and indistinct. It may vary exceedingly in different stages of the same person's experience. At one time he may be full of "joy and peace in believing;" at another he may be depressed and cast down. But in all people who have a "good hope," in a greater or less degree, this consciousness does exist.

I am aware that this truth is one which has been fearfully abused and perverted. It has been brought into great disrepute by the fanaticism, enthusiasm, and extravagance of some professing Christians. Mere animal excitement has been mistaken for the work of the Holy Spirit. The over-wrought feelings of weak and nervous people have been prematurely and rashly supposed to be the result of grace. Men and women have been hastily pronounced "converted," who have soon gone back to the world, and proved utterly "unconverted" and dead in sins. And then has come in the devil. Contempt has been poured on religious feelings of every description—their very existence has been denied and scouted; and the result is that the very name of "feelings" in religion is in many quarters dreaded and disliked.

But the abuse and perversion of a truth, must never be allowed to rob us of the use of it. When all has been said that can be said against fanaticism and enthusiasm, it is still undeniable that religious feelings are plainly spoken of and described in Scripture. The Word of God tells us that the true Christian has "peace," and "rest," and "joy," and "confidence." It tells us of some who have the "witness of the Spirit"—of some who "fear no evil"—of some who enjoy "assurance"—of some who "know whom they have believed"—of some who "are persuaded that they shall never be separated from the love of God in Christ." These are the feelings for which I contend—this is that sober, inward experience in which I see nothing extravagant, enthusiastic, or fanatical. Of such feelings I say boldly, no man need be ashamed. I go further, and say that no man has a "good hope" who does not know *something,* however faintly, of these feelings in his own heart. I go further still, and say that to hold any other doctrine is to cast dishonor on the whole work of the Holy Spirit.

Will anyone tell us that God ever intended a true Christian to have no inward consciousness of his own Christianity? Will anyone say that the Bible teaches that people can pass from death to life, be pardoned, renewed, and sanctified, and yet feel nothing of this mighty change within? Let those think it who will—I can hold no such doctrine. I would as soon believe that Lazarus did not know that he was raised from the grave, or Bartimeus that he was restored to sight—as believe that a man cannot feel within him the Spirit of God.

Can a weary man lie down in bed—and not feel rested? Can the parched traveler in an African desert drink cool water—and not feel refreshed? Can the shivering sailor, in Arctic regions, draw near to the fire—and not feel warmed? Can the half-naked, hungry, homeless wanderer in our streets be clothed, fed, and housed—and not feel comforted? Can the fainting sick man receive the healing cordial—and not feel revived? I cannot believe it. I believe that in each case something will be felt. Just so I cannot believe that a man can be a true Christian if he does not feel *something* within. A new birth, a pardon of sins, a conscience sprinkled with Christ's blood,

an indwelling of the Holy Spirit—are no such small matters as people seem to suppose. He who knows anything of them will feel them. There will be a real, distinct witness in his inward man.

Let us beware of a hope that is not felt, and a Christianity that is destitute of any inward experience. They are idols of the present day, and idols before which thousands are bowing down. Thousands are trying to persuade themselves that people may be born again, and have the Spirit, and yet not be sensible of it—or that people may be members of Christ, and receive benefit from Him, who have neither faith nor love towards His name. These are the favorite doctrines of modern days! These be the gods which have taken the place of Diana and Mercury, and "the image which fell down from Jupiter!" These be the last new deities invented by poor, weak, idolatrous man! From all such idols let us keep ourselves with jealous care. Golden as their heads may be—their feet are no better than clay! They cannot stand—they must, sooner or later, break down. Miserable indeed are the prospects of those who worship them! Their hope is not the hope of the Bible—it is the hope of a dead corpse. Where Christ and the Spirit are their presence will *be felt!*

Can anyone in his senses suppose that the apostle Paul would have been content with Christians who knew nothing of inward feelings? Can we imagine that mighty man of God sanctioning a religion which a person might have, and yet experience nothing within? Can we picture to ourselves a member of one of the Churches he founded, who was utterly unacquainted with peace, or joy, or confidence towards God, and was yet approved by the great apostle as a true believer! Away with the idea! It will not bear reflection for a moment. The testimony of Scripture is plain and explicit. Talk as people will about enthusiasm and excitement, there are such things as *feelings* in religion. The Christian who knows nothing of them is not yet converted, and has everything to learn. The cold marble of a Grecian statue may well be unimpassioned. The dried mummy from Egypt may well look stiff and still. The stuffed beast in a museum may well be motionless and cold. They are all lifeless things. But where there is life there will always be some feeling. The "good hope" is a hope that can be felt.

V. In the last place, **a good hope is a hope that is manifested outwardly in the life.** Once more, what says the Scripture? "Everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, even as He is pure." (1 John 3:3.) The man who has a good hope will show it in all his ways. It will influence his life, his character, and his daily conduct; it will make him strive to be a holy, godly, conscientious, spiritual man. He will feel under a constant obligation to serve and please Him from whom his hope comes. He will say to himself, "What shall I render to the Lord for all His benefits to me?" He will feel, "I am bought with a price—let me glorify God with body and spirit, which are His." "Let me show forth the praises of Him who has called me out of darkness into His marvelous light." Let me prove that I am Christ's friend, "by keeping His commandments." (Psalm 116:12; 1 Cor 6:20; 1 Peter 2:9; John 15:14.)

This is a point which has been of infinite importance in every age of the Church. It is a truth which is always assailed by Satan, and needs guarding with jealous care. Let us grasp it firmly, and make it a settled principle in our religion. If there is light in a house it will shine through the windows—if there is any real hope in a man's soul it will be seen in his ways. Show me your hope in your life and daily behavior. Where is it? Wherein does it appear? If you cannot show it, you may be sure it is nothing better than a delusion and a snare.

The times demand a very distinct testimony from all ministers on this subject. The truth on this point requires very plain speaking. Let us settle it in our minds deeply, and beware of letting it go. Let no man deceive us with vain words. "He that does righteousness is righteous." "He that says he abides in Him, ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked." (1 John 2:6; 3:7.) The hope that does not make a man honest, honorable, truthful, sober, diligent, unselfish, loving, meek, kind, and faithful in all the relations of life, is not from God. It is only "the talk of the lips which tends to poverty." "He that boasts himself of a false gift, is like clouds and wind without rain." (Prov. 14:23; 25:14.)

FALSE HOPES

(a) There are some in the present day who flatter themselves they have a good hope because they possess ***religious knowledge***. They are acquainted with the letter of their Bibles; they can argue and dispute about points of doctrine—they can quote texts by the score, in defense of their own theological opinions. They are perfect Benjamites in controversy—they can "sling stones at an hair-breadth, and not miss." (Judges 20:16.) And yet they have no fruits of the Spirit, no love, no meekness, no gentleness, no humility, nothing of the mind that was in Christ. And have these people a true hope? Let those believe it who will, I dare not say so. I hold with Paul, "If I speak the languages of men and of angels, but do not have love, I am a sounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so that I can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. And if I donate all my goods to feed the poor, and if I give my body to be burned, but do not have love, I gain nothing. Love is patient; love is kind. Love does not envy; is not boastful; is not conceited; does not act improperly; is not selfish; is not provoked; does not keep a record of wrongs; finds no joy in unrighteousness, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things." Yes—hope without love is no hope at all.

(b) There are some again who presume to think they have a good hope because of *God's everlasting* ***election***. They boldly persuade themselves that they were once called and chosen of God to salvation. They take it for granted that there was once a real work of the Spirit on their hearts, and that all therefore must be well. They look down upon others, who are afraid of professing as much as they do. They seem to think, "We are the people of God, we are the temple of the Lord, we are the favored servants of the Most High—we are those who shall reign in heaven, and none beside." And yet these very people can lie, and cheat, and swindle, and be dishonorable! Some of them can even get drunk in private, and secretly commit sins of which it is a shame to speak! And have they a good hope? God forbid that I should say so! The election which is not "unto sanctification" is not of God—but of the devil. The hope that does not make a man holy is no hope at all.

(c) There are some in this day who fancy they have a good hope because **they *like hearing the Gospel***. They are fond of hearing good sermons. They will go miles to listen to some favorite preacher, and will even weep and be much affected by his words. To see them in church one would think, "Surely these are the disciples of Christ, surely these are excellent Christians!" And yet these very people can plunge into every folly and gaiety of the world. Night after night they can go with their whole heart to the opera, the theater, or the ball. They are to be seen on the race-course. They are advanced in every worldly revel. Their voice on Sunday is the voice of Jacob—but their hands on week days are the hands of Esau. And have these people a good hope? I dare not say so. "The friendship of the world is enmity with God;" the hope that does not prevent conformity to the world, is no hope at all. "Whoever is born of God overcomes the world." (James 4:4; 1 John 5:4.)

Let us beware of any hope that does not exercise a sanctifying influence over our hearts, lives, tastes, conduct, and conversation. It is a hope that never came down from above. It is mere base metal, and counterfeit coin. It lacks the mint-stamp of the Holy Spirit, and will never pass current in heaven. The man that has a real hope, no doubt, may be overtaken in a fault; He may stumble occasionally in his practice, and be drawn aside from the right path for a while. But the person who can allow himself in any willful and *habitual* breach of God's law, is rotten at the heart. He may talk of his hope as much as he pleases—but he has none in reality. His religion is a joy to the devil, a stumbling block to the world, a sorrow to true Christians, and an offence to God. Oh, that people would consider these things! Oh, that many would use some such prayer as this, "From antinomianism and hypocrisy, good Lord, deliver me!"

I have now done what I proposed to do. I have shown the five leading marks of a sound good hope.

(1) It is a hope that a man can explain.

(2) It is a hope that is drawn from Scripture.

(3) It is a hope that is founded on Christ.

(4) It is a hope that is felt within the heart.

(5) It is a hope that is manifested outwardly in the life.

Such, I firmly believe is the hope of all true Christians, of every name, and Church, and denomination, and people, and tongue. Such is the hope that we must have, if we mean to go to heaven. Such is the hope without which, I firmly believe, no man can be saved. Such is "the good hope through grace."

Allow me now to **APPLY** the whole subject to the conscience of every reader in a practical way. What shall it profit us to know truths unless we use them? What shall it avail us to see the real nature of a good hope unless the matter be brought home to our own souls? This is what I now propose to do, if God permits, in the remainder of this paper. May the Spirit of God apply my words to the heart of every reader of these pages with mighty power! **Man may speak, and preach, and write—but God alone can convert!**

(1) My first word of application shall be a **QUESTION**. I offer it to all who read this paper, and I entreat each reader to give it an answer. That question is, "What is your own hope about your soul?"

I do not ask this out of idle curiosity. I ask it as an ambassador for Christ, and a friend to your best interests. I ask it in order to stir up self-inquiry, and promote your spiritual welfare. I ask, "What is your hope about your soul?"

I do not want to know whether you go to church or chapel—there will be no account of these differences in heaven. I do not want to know whether you approve of the Gospel, and think it very right and proper that people should have their religion, and say their prayers; all this is beside the mark—it is not the point. The point I want you to look at is this, "What is your hope about your soul?"

It matters nothing what your relations think. It matters nothing what other people in the parish or town approve. The account of God will not be taken by towns, or by parishes, or by families—each must stand forth separately and answer for himself. "Everyone of us shall give account of himself to God." (Rom. 14:12.) And what is the defense you mean to set up? What is to be your plea? "What is your hope about your soul?"

Time is short, and is passing quickly away—in a few years, we shall be all dead and gone! The trees perhaps are cut down out of which our coffins will be made—the shrouds perhaps are woven which will surround our bodies—the spades perhaps are made which will dig our graves. Eternity draws near! There ought to be no trifling. "What, what is your hope about your soul?"

Another world will soon begin. Trade, politics, money, lands, cottages, palaces, eating, drinking, dressing, reading, playing, working, dancing, feasting—will soon be at an end forever. There will remain nothing but a heaven for some, and a hell for others! "What, what is your hope about your soul?"

I have asked my question. And now I ask every reader as in the sight of God, *What is your reply?*

Many would say—if they spoke the truth, "I don't know anything about it. I suppose I am not what I ought to be. I dare say I ought to have more religion than I have. I trust I shall have more some day. But as to any hope at present—I really don't know!"

I can quite believe that this is the state of many. I have seen enough of the spiritual ignorance of people to fill me with deep sorrow. I am convinced that there is no error, or heresy, or *"ism,"* which is ruining so many souls as the heresy of ignorance. I am convinced that there are myriads of professors in England who do not even know the A B C's of Christianity, and are nothing better than **baptized heathen!** I have heard of a man, in his last days, whose only hope was, "that he had always kept his Church, and voted for the Blues." I have heard of a woman, who was asked on her death-bed where she hoped to go, and said, "She hoped she should go with the crowd." I have little doubt that there are thousands of people in this country who are much in the same condition, knowing nothing whatever about their state before God. If this be the condition of any reader of this paper, I can only say, May God convert you! May God awaken you! May God open your eyes before it is too late!

"When we deal with the carnal, secure, careless sinners (and they are a vast multitude), and ask them a reason of that hope of heaven they pretend to, is not this their common answer, "I live inoffensively; I keep God's law as well as I can; whenever I fail, I repent, and beg God's mercy for Christ's sake—my heart is sincere, though my knowledge and attainments be short of others." If we go on further to inquire what acquaintance they have with Jesus Christ? what application their souls have made to Him? what workings of faith on Him? what use they have made of His righteousness for justification, and of His Spirit for sanctification? what they know of living by faith on Jesus Christ?—we seem to be barbarians to them! And in this sad state thousands in England live, and die, and perish eternally. Yet so thick is the darkness of the age, that many of them live here and go hence with the reputation of good Christians; and some of them may have their funeral sermon and praise preached by an ignorant flattering minister; though it may be the poor creatures did never, in the whole course of their lives, nor at their deaths, employ Jesus Christ so much for any entry to heaven,

purchased by His blood and accessible by faith in Him—as a poor Turk does Mahomet for a room in his beastly paradise!"—Traill.

Look at that man who goes to the Bank of England on a dividend day, and asks to be paid a large sum of money. Is his name down among the list of people to be paid? No!—Has he any title or right to claim payment? No! He has none! He only knows that other people are receiving money, and that he would like to receive some too. You know well that you would call the man "out of his mind;" you would say he was nothing better than a madman. But stop! Take care what you are saying! You are the real madman, if you mean to claim heaven at last, when you have no title, no warrant, no ground of hope to show. Once more, I say—May God open your eyes!

But many, I believe, would reply to my question that "they have hope." They would say, "I am not as bad as some, at any rate. I am no heathen. I am no infidel. I have some hope about my soul."

If this be your case, I beseech you to consider calmly what your hope really is. I entreat you not to be content with saying, like a parrot, "I hope—I hope—I hope;" but to examine seriously into the nature of your confidence, and to make sure that it is well-founded. Is it a hope you can explain? Is it scriptural? Is it built on Christ? Is it felt in your heart? Is it sanctifying to your life? All is not gold that glitters. I have warned you already that there is a false hope as well as a true hope—I offer the warning again. I beseech you to take heed that you be not deceived. Beware of mistakes.

There are ships lying quietly in London docks, about to sail for every part of the globe. They all look equally trustworthy, so long as they are in harbor; they have all equally good names, and are equally well-rigged and painted—but they are not all equally well-built and equally safe. Once let them put to sea, and meet with rough weather, and the difference between the sound and unsound ships will soon appear. Many a ship which looked well in dock has proved not sea-worthy when she got into deep water, and has gone down at last with all hands on board! Just so it is with many a false hope. It has failed completely, when most needed—it has broken down at last, and ruined its possessor's soul. You will soon have to put to sea. I say again, beware of mistakes!

I leave my question here. I earnestly pray that God may apply it to the hearts of all who read this paper. I am sure it is much needed. I believe there never was a time when there was so much counterfeit religion current, and so many "false hopes" passing off for true. There never was a time when there was so much high profession, and so little spiritual practice, so much loud talk about preachers, and parties, and Churches, and so little close walking with God, and real work of the Spirit. There is no lack of blossoms in Christendom—but there is a melancholy scarcity of ripe fruit. There is an abundance of controversial theology—but a dearth of practical holiness. There are myriads who have a name to live—but few whose hearts are really given to Jesus Christ—few whose affections are really set on things above. There will be some awful failures yet in many quarters—there will be still more awful disclosures at the last day. There are many hopes now-a-days, which are utterly destitute of foundation. I say, for the last time, Beware of mistakes.

(2) My second word of application shall be *a* **REQUEST**. I make it to all readers of this paper who feel they have no hope and desire to have it. It is a short simple request. I entreat them to seek "a good hope" while it can be found.

A good hope is within the reach of any man, if he is only willing to seek it. It is called emphatically in Scripture, a "good hope through grace." It is freely offered, even as it was freely purchased—it may be freely obtained, "without money and without price." Our past lives do not make it impossible to obtain it, however bad they may have been; our present weaknesses and infirmities do not shut us out, however great they may be. The same grace which provided mankind with a hope, makes a free, full, and unlimited invitation. "Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely." "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find." (Rev. 22:17; Matt. 7:7.)

The Lord Jesus Christ is able and willing to give "a good hope" to all who really want it. He is sealed and appointed by God the Father to give the bread of life to all who hunger, and the water of life to all who thirst. "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell." (Coloss. 1:19.) In Him there is pardon and peace with God, bought by the precious blood which He shed upon the cross. In Him there is joy and peace for any believer, and a solid, well-grounded expectation of good things to come. In Him there is rest for the weary, refuge for the fearful, a cleansing fountain for the unclean, medicine for the sick, healing for the broken-hearted, and hope for the lost. Whoever feels laboring and heavy-laden with sin, whoever feels anxious and distressed about his soul, whoever feels afraid of death and unfit to die—whoever he is, *let him go to Christ and trust in Him*. This is the thing to be done—this is the way to follow. Whoever wants "hope," let him go to Christ.

If any reader of this paper really wants to enjoy a good hope, let him seek it from the Lord Jesus Christ. There is every encouragement to do so. The Thessalonians in old time were, like the Ephesians, dead in trespasses and sins, having no hope, and without God in the world; but when Paul preached Jesus to them, they arose from their miserable state and became new people. God gave them a "good hope through grace." The door through which Manasseh and Magdalene entered, is still open! The fountain in which Zacchaeus and Matthew were washed, is still unsealed! Seek hope from Christ, and you shall find it.

Seek it *honestly, and with no secret reserve*. The ruin of many is that they are not fair and straightforward. They say that they "try as much as they can," and that they really "want to be saved," and that they really "look to Christ;" and yet in the chamber of their own heart there lies some darling sin, to which they privately cling, and are resolved not to give it up. They are like Augustine, who said, "Lord convert me—but not now." Seek honestly, if you wish to find a good hope.

Seek it in *humble prayer*. Pour out your heart before the Lord Jesus, and tell Him all the needs of your soul. **Do as you would have done had you lived in Galilee eighteen hundred years ago, and had a leprosy—go directly to Christ, and lay before Him your cares!** Tell Him that you are a poor, sinful creature—but that you have heard He is a gracious Savior, and that you come to Him for "hope" for your soul. Tell Him that you have nothing to say for yourself—no excuse to make, nothing of your own to plead—but that you have heard that He "receives sinners," and as such you come to Him. (Luke 15:2.)

Seek it at once *without delay*. Halt no more between two opinions—do not linger another day. Cast away the remnants of pride which are still keeping you back—draw near to Jesus as a heavy-laden sinner, and "lay hold upon the hope set before you." (Heb. 6:18.) This is the point to which all must come at last if they mean to be saved. Sooner or later they must knock at the door of grace and ask to be admitted. Why not do it at once? Why stand still looking at the bread of life? Why not come forward and eat it? Why remain outside the city of refuge? Why not enter in and be safe? Why not seek hope at once, and never rest until you find it? Never did soul seek

honestly in the way I have marked out, and fail to find.

The words of Traill on this point of coming to Christ by faith, deserve many thoughts. They throw light on a subject which is constantly misunderstood. He says, "When we come to deal with a poor, awakened sinner, who sees his lost estate, and that he is condemned by the law of God, we find the same principles (pride and ignorance) working in him. We see him sick and wounded—we tell him where his help lies, in Jesus Christ; and what his proper work is, to apply to Him by faith. What is his answer—'Alas,' says the man, 'I have been, and I am so vile a sinner, my heart is so bad, and so full of plagues and corruptions, that I cannot think of believing on Christ. But if I had but repentance, and some holiness in heart and life, and such and such gracious qualifications—I would then believe.' This his answer is as full of nonsense, ignorance and pride, as words can contain or express. It implies—

(1) If I were pretty well recovered, I would employ the Physician, Christ.

(2) There is some hope to work out these good things by myself, without Christ.

(3) When I come to Christ with a price in my hand I shall be welcome.

(4) I can come to Christ when I will.

So ignorant are people naturally of faith in Jesus Christ; and no words, or warnings, or plainest instructions can beat into men's heads and hearts that the first coming to Christ by faith, and believing on Him, is not a believing we shall be saved by Him—but a believing on Him, that we may be saved by Him."—*Traill's Works.*

(3) My last word of application shall be **COUNSEL**. I offer it to all who have really obtained "good hope through grace." I offer it to all who are really leaning on Christ, walking in the narrow way, and led by the Spirit of God. I ask them to accept advice from one who hopes that he is "their brother and companion in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ" (Rev. 1:9.) I believe the advice to be sound and good.

(a) If you have a good hope *be zealous and watchful over it.* Beware that Satan does not steal it away for a season, as he did from David and Peter. Beware that you do not lose sight of it by giving way to inconsistencies, and by conformity to the world. Examine it often, and make sure that it is not becoming dim. Keep it bright by daily carefulness over your temper, thoughts, and words. Keep it healthy by hearty, fervent, and continual prayer. The hope of the Christian is a very delicate plant. It is an exotic from above—it is not a plant of natural growth. It is easily chilled and nipped by the cold frosts of this world. Unless watered and tended carefully, it will soon dwindle away to a mere nothing, and scarcely be felt or seen. None find out this so painfully as dying believers who have not walked very closely with God. They find that they have sown thorns in their dying pillows, and brought clouds between themselves and the sun.

(b) For another thing, **if you have a good hope, *keep it always ready*.** Have it at your right hand, prepared for immediate use—look at it often, and take care that it is in good order. Trials often break in upon us suddenly, like an armed man. Sicknesses and injuries to our mortal frame sometimes lay us low on our beds without any warning. Happy is he who keeps his lamp well trimmed, and lives in the daily sense of communion with Christ!

Did you ever see a fire-engine in some old country house? Did you ever remark how often it lies for months in a dark shed, untouched, unexamined, and uncleaned? The valves are out of order; the leather hose is full of holes; the pumps are rusty and stiff. A house might be almost burnt to the ground before it could lift a pailful of water. In its present state it is a well-near useless machine.

Did you ever see a ship in dock at harbor? The hull may perhaps be good and sound; the keel and topsides, and timbers and beams, and decks may be all that you could desire. But she is not rigged, or stored, or armed, or fit for service. It would take weeks and months to make her ready for sea. In her present state she could do little for her country's defense. The hope of many a believer is like that fire-engine, and that ship. It exists, it lives, it is real, it is true, it is sound—it is good—it came down from heaven—it was implanted by the Holy Spirit. But, alas, *it is not ready for use!* Its possessor will find that out, by his own lack of joy and sensible comfort, when he comes to his death-bed. Beware that your hope be not a hope of this kind. If you have a hope keep it ready for use, and within reach of your hand.

(c) For another thing, **if you have a good hope, seek and pray that it may *grow more and more strong* every year.** Do not be content with a "day of small things;" covet the best gifts—desire to enjoy full assurance. Strive to attain to Paul's standard, and to be able to say, "I know whom I have believed." "I am persuaded that neither death nor life shall separate me from the love of God which is in Jesus Christ." (2 Tim. 1:12; Rom. 8:38.)

Believe me, this part of my counsel is one that deserves close attention. Believe me, the things before us all will try our hope of what sort it is. Sickness and death are solemn things. They strip off all the tinsel and paint from a man's religion; they discover the weak places in our Christianity; they strain our hopes to the very uttermost, and often make us well near despair. Old Christian, in Pilgrim's Progress, had a sore trial at his latter end in crossing the cold river before he entered the celestial city. Faithful and true as he was, he still cried out, "All your billows go over me," and had a hard struggle to keep his footing. May we all lay this to heart! May we seek to *know and feel* that we are one with Christ and Christ in us! He that has hope does well; but he that has assurance does better. Blessed indeed are they who "abound in hope through the power of the Holy Spirit." (Rom. 15:13.)

(d) Finally, **if you have a good hope, *be thankful* for it, and give God daily praise.** Who has made you to differ from the perishing world around you? Why have you been taught to feel your sins, and nothingness, while others are ignorant and self-righteous? Why have you been taught to look to Jesus, while others are looking to their own goodness, or resting on some mere form of religion? Why are you longing and striving to be holy, while others are caring for nothing but this world? Why are these things so? There is but one answer, Grace, grace, free grace, has done it all. For that grace praise God. For that grace be thankful.

Go on, then, to your journey's end, "rejoicing in hope of the glory of God." (Rom. 5:2.) Go on, rejoicing in the thought that though you are a poor sinner Jesus is a most gracious Savior, and that though you have trials here for a little season, heaven shall soon make amends for all.

Go on, wearing hope as a helmet in all the battles of life—a hope of pardon, a hope of perseverance, a hope of acquittal in the judgment day, a hope of final glory. Put on the breast-plate of righteousness; take the shield of faith; have your loins girt about with truth; wield valiantly the sword of the Spirit. But never forget—as ever you would be a happy Christian—never forget to put on the "helmet of hope." (1 Thess. 5:8.)

Go on, in spite of an ill-natured world, and be not moved by its laughter or its persecution, its slanders or its sneers. Comfort your heart with the thought that the time is short, the good things yet to come, the night far spent, the "morning without clouds" at hand. (2 Sam. 23:4.) When the wicked man dies his expectation perishes; but your expectation shall not deceive you—your reward is sure.

Go on, and be not cast down because you are troubled by doubts and fears. You are yet in the body—this world is not your rest. The devil hates you because you have escaped from him, and he will do all he can to rob you of peace. The very fact that you have fears is an evidence that you feel you have something to lose. The true Christian may ever be discerned by his warfare—quite as much as by his peace; and by his fears—quite as much as by his hopes. The ships at anchor may swing to and fro with the tide, and pitch heavily in a south-eastern gale; but so long as their anchors hold the ground they ride safely, and have no cause to fear. The hope of the true Christian is the "anchor of his soul, sure and steadfast." (Heb. 6:19.) His heart may be tossed to and fro sometimes—but he is safe in Christ. The waves may swell, and lift him up and down—but he will not be wrecked.

Go on, and "hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." (1 Pet. 1:13.) Yet a little time, and faith shall be changed to sight, and hope to certainty—you shall see even as you have been seen, and know even as you have been known. A few more tossings to and fro on the waves of this troublesome world—a few more battles and conflicts with our spiritual enemy—a few more years of tears and partings, of working and suffering, of crosses and cares, of disappointments and vexations, and then—then we shall be at home! The harbor lights are already in view—the haven of rest is not far off. *There* we shall find all that we have hoped for, and find that it was a million times better than our hopes. *There* we shall find all the saints, and no sin, no cares of this world, no money, no sickness, no death, no devil. *There,* above all, we shall find Jesus, and be ever with the Lord! (1 Thess. 4:17.) Let us hope on. **It is worth while to carry the cross and follow Christ.** Let the world laugh and mock, if it will; it is worth while to have "a good hope through grace," and be a thorough decided Christian. I say again—Let us hope on!

Christ in the Sick Room

By J. C. Ryle

Isaiah had said—"Let them take a lump of figs, and lay it for a plaster on the boil, and he shall recover." —Isaiah 38:21

Sickness, disease, decay, and death are the common lot of all mankind without exception. You have a striking proof of this in the chapter from which my text is taken. The Holy Spirit shows us a king and ruler of men, a dweller in palaces, a possessor of all that money can obtain, a good man, a holy man, a friend of God—laid low by disease, like the poorest man in the kingdom. Hear what the Holy Spirit says, "In those days Hezekiah was sick unto death."

This is the old story. It is the history of every child of Adam for the last 6,000 years—except Enoch and Elijah. It is as true of the **infant** who only lives a few hours, as it is true of Methuselah who lived 969 years. The story of every patriarch in the 5th of Genesis concludes with the simple words "and he died."

There is no discharge in this war. Sooner or later all die. There is no exemption for any rank or class or condition. High and low, rich and poor, gentle and simple, learned and unlearned, kings and their subjects, saints and sinners—all alike are liable to disease and all must submit to the king of terrors. The admirals and generals who have left behind a world-wide reputation, the statesmen who have swayed senates and made indelible marks on the history of their own time—are all carried one after another to the grave. Rich men, in spite of all their privileges, enjoy no immunity from sickness and death.

No medical skill can prevent death. Our physicians and surgeons are unwearied in their efforts to find new remedies and modes of treatment. They compass sea and land in order to prevent disease, and discover remedies, diminish pain, and lengthen life. But in spite of vaccination and quinine and chloroform, in spite of all that medicine and surgery can do—there is something which your ablest doctors find beyond their reach. When the time appointed by God comes, they cannot keep men and women alive.

After all, there is nothing amazing in this. The tabernacle or tent in which our soul lives, **the human body, is a most frail and complicated machine.** From the sole of the foot to the crown of the head there is not a part of us which is not liable to disease. When I think of the variety of ailments which may assail our frame, I do not wonder so much that we die at last—as I do that we live so long.

But whence comes this liability to sickness, disease, and death? How are we to account for it? This is a question which will arise in many minds—and it is one which ought to be answered. Perfection is the ordinary mark of all God's handiwork—perfection in the heaven above us and the earth beneath us—perfection in the movements of a planet like Jupiter—and perfection in a fly's wing or a blade of grass.

Look through a telescope or microscope at anything which God created and you find nothing defective. How then can we account for the power of disease, decay, and death over the body of man?

There is only one book that supplies an answer to this question. That book is the Bible. **The fall of man at the beginning has brought sin into the world, and sin has brought with it the curse of sickness, suffering, and pain.** These are not things which God created at the beginning. They are the consequences of man's transgression. To suppose that a perfect God could deliberately create imperfection, is a supposition too monstrous to be believed. It is man that is to blame—and not God. The countless bodily sufferings that we see are the just consequence of man's original disobedience.

Here to my mind lies one among many proofs that the Bible is given by inspiration of God. It accounts for many things which the Deist cannot explain. When I see a little infant, too young to know good from evil, convulsed with bodily pain and hovering between life and death in a weeping mother's arms, I would be utterly puzzled and confounded if I did not believe the Bible. I would ask myself, "Where is the justice and mercy of allowing such distress? Where is the wisdom and love of the Creator?" But when I turn to the Bible the mysterious problem is solved. I learn that suffering is the result of Adam's fall. That infant would not have suffered if Adam had not sinned.

In the next place I ask you to learn from this chapter that **sickness is not an unmixed evil.**

That King Hezekiah received **spiritual benefit from his illness** I think there can be no doubt. The beautiful and pathetic language of his "writing," which Isaiah was inspired to record, places that beyond question. The good man saw things in his sickness which he had never seen clearly and fully in the days of health. "By these things," he says, "men live." He might have added, "By these things men learn."

I do not say that sickness always does good. Alas! We ministers know to our sorrow that it frequently does no good at all. Too often we see men and women, after recovering from a long and dangerous illness, more hardened and irreligious than they were before. Too often they return to the world, if not to Sin, with more eagerness and zest than ever; and the impressions made on their conscience in the hour of sickness are swept away like children's writing on the sand of the sea-shore when the tide flows.

But I do say that **sickness ought to do us good**. And I do say that God sends it in order to do us good. **It is a friendly letter from heaven.** It is a knock at the door of conscience. It is the voice of the Savior asking to be let in. Happy is he who opens the letter and reads it, who hears the knock and opens the door, who welcomes Christ to the sick room. Come now, and let me plead with you a little about this, and show you a few of the lessons which He by sickness would teach us.

1. Sickness is meant **to make us think**—to remind us that we have a soul as well as a body—an immortal soul—a soul that will live forever in happiness or in misery—and that if this soul is not saved we had better never have been born.

2. Sickness is meant **to teach us that there is a world beyond the grave**—and that the world we now live in is only a training-place for another dwelling, where there will be no decay, no sorrow, no tears, no misery, and no sin.

3. Sickness is meant **to make us look at our past lives honestly**, fairly, and conscientiously. Am I ready for my great change if I should not get better? Do I repent truly of my sins? Are my sins forgiven and washed away in Christ's blood? Am I prepared to meet God?

4. Sickness is meant **to make us see the emptiness of the world** and its utter inability to satisfy the highest and deepest needs of the soul.

5. Sickness is meant **to send us to our Bibles**. That blessed Book, in the days of health, is too often left on the shelf, becomes the safest place in which to put a bank-note, and is never opened from January to December. But sickness often brings it down from the shelf and throws new light on its pages.

6. Sickness is meant **to make us pray**. Too many, I fear, never pray at all, or they only rattle over a few hurried words morning and evening without thinking what they do. But prayer often becomes a reality when the valley of the shadow of death is in sight.

7. Sickness is meant **to make us repent and break off our sins**. If we will not hear the voice of mercies, God sometimes makes us "hear the rod."

8. Sickness is meant **to draw us to Christ**. Naturally we do not see the full value of that blessed Savior. We secretly imagine that our prayers, good deeds, and sacrament-receiving will save our souls. But when flesh begins to fail, the absolute necessity of a Redeemer, a Mediator, and an Advocate with the Father, stands out before men's eyes like fire, and makes them understand those words, "Simply to Your cross I cling," as they never did before. Sickness has done this for many—they have found Christ in the sick room.

9. Last, but not least, sickness is meant **to make us feeling and sympathizing towards others**. By nature we are all far below our blessed Master's example, who had not only a **hand** to help all, but a **heart** to feel for all. None, I suspect, are so unable to sympathize as those who have never had trouble themselves—and none are so able to feel as those who have drunk most deeply the cup of pain and sorrow.

Men and brethren, when your time comes to be ill, I beseech you not to forget what the illness means. Beware of fretting and murmuring and complaining, and giving way to an impatient spirit. **Regard your sickness as a blessing in disguise—a good and not an evil—a friend and not an enemy.** No doubt we should all prefer to learn spiritual lessons in the school of ease and not under the rod. But rest assured that God knows better than we do how to teach us. The light of the last day will show you that there was a meaning and a "need be" in all your bodily ailments. The lessons that we learn on a sick-bed, when we are shut out from the world, are often lessons which we should never learn elsewhere. Settle it down in your minds, that, however much you may dislike it, sickness is not an unmixed evil.

Only One Way—Christ!

by J. C. Ryle

"Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." Acts 4:12

These words are striking in themselves. But they are much more striking if you consider when and by whom they were spoken. They

were spoken by a poor and unpopular Christian, in the midst of a persecuting Jewish Council and it was a wonderful confession about Christ. These words were spoken by the lips of the Apostle Peter. This is the man who, a few weeks before, abandoned Jesus and fled: this is the very man who three times denied his Lord. There is another spirit in him now. He now stands up boldly before priests and Sadducees, and tells them the truth to their face, saying: "[Jesus] is the stone you builders rejected, which has become the capstone. Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name in heaven given to men by which we must be saved" [Acts 4:11-12].

In considering this serious subject there are three things I wish to do:

I. First, to show you the doctrine being declared here by the Apostle.

II. Secondly, to show you some reasons why this doctrine must be true.

III. Thirdly, to show you some consequences that naturally flow from the doctrine.

I. First let me show you THE DOCTRINE OF THE TEXT. Let us make sure that we correctly understand what the Apostle Peter means. He says of Christ, "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name in heaven given to men by which we must be saved." Now what is this? This is a very critical statement that we need to clearly understand. He means that no one can be saved from sin—from its guilt, power, and consequences—except by Jesus Christ. He means that no one can have peace with God the Father—obtain forgiveness of sin in this world, and escape the wrath of God that is coming after death—except through the atoning death and mediation of Jesus Christ. Only in Christ will we find God's rich provision of salvation for sinners. Only in Christ will we find God's abundant mercies coming down from Heaven to earth.

Only the blood of Christ can cleanse us; only the righteousness of Christ's can clothe us; Only the sacrifice of Christ can give us a title to heaven. Jews and Gentiles, educated and uneducated, rich and poor—everyone, no matter what their position or standing in life must either be saved by Jesus Christ or lost forever. And the Apostle emphatically adds, "There is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." There is no other person commissioned, sealed, and appointed by God the Father to be the Savior of sinners, except Christ. The keys of life and death are only found in His hand, and all who want to be saved must go to Him.

There was only one place of safety in the day when the flood came upon the earth, and that was Noah's ark. All other places and things—mountains, towers, trees, rafts, boats—all were completely useless. Likewise, there is only one hiding place for sinners who want to escape the storm of God's anger—they must hide their souls in Christ. There was only one man to whom the Egyptians could go to in the time of famine, when they needed food—they could only go to Joseph: it was a waste of time to go to anyone else. Likewise, there is only One to whom hungering souls must go, if they don't want to perish forever—they must go to Christ. There was only one word that could save the lives of the men of Ephraim in the day when the men of Gilead fought with them, and took control of the fords of the Jordan [Judges 12]—they must say the word "Shibboleth," or die. Well, in the same way, there is only one name that will save us when we stand at the gate of heaven—we must name the name of Jesus as our only hope, or be thrown into the Lake of Fire forever.

Such is the doctrine of the text. "Salvation is found in no one else but Jesus Christ: in Him is complete salvation—salvation to the uttermost, salvation for the very chief of sinners—without Jesus there is no salvation at all." This doctrine is in perfect harmony with our Lord's own words in the Book of John: "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" [John 14:6]. It is the same thing that Paul told the Corinthians: "No one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ" [1 Corinthians 3:11]. And it is the same truth that John tells us in his first Epistle: "God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life" [1 John 5:11-12]. All these texts state the same undeniable truth, that there is no salvation except through the person of Jesus Christ.

Dear friends, make sure that you understand this before you pass from this world. Perhaps you think this is old news. Perhaps you feel, "These are ancient things: who doesn't know this simple truth? Of course we believe there is no salvation except by Christ." But listen carefully to what I say: make sure that you understand this doctrine, or else in time you will stumble, and be offended at what I am about to say. Remember that you are to base your entire salvation on the person of Christ and on Christ only. You are to totally reject and dismiss all other hopes and trusts. You are not to rest partially on Christ—partially on doing all you can—partially on going to church—partially on receiving the Lord's Supper. In the matter of your justification Christ is to be everything. This is the doctrine of the text before us this morning. Remember that heaven is standing before you, and Christ is the only door into it; hell is beneath you, and only Christ is able to deliver you from it; the devil is behind you and accusing you of sin, and Christ is the only place of safety from the devil's wrath and accusations; the law is against you, and only Christ is able to redeem you; sin is weighing you down, and only Christ is able to take it away. This is the doctrine of the text before us this morning. Now do you see it? I hope you do. But I fear many who think so, may find, before this sermon is over, that they really don't.

II. Let me show you, in the second place, some reasons why the doctrine of the text, that Jesus is the only way of salvation, must be true. I could cut short this part of the subject with one simple argument: "God says so." "One plain text," said an old preacher, "is as good as a thousand reasons." But I will not do this. I intend to answer the many objections that are ready to rise in many hearts against this doctrine, by pointing out the strong foundations on which it stands.

(1) Let me then say, for one thing, the doctrine, that Jesus is the only way of salvation, must be true, **because man is what man is.** Now, what is man? There is one broad, sweeping answer, which takes in the whole human race: man is a sinful creature. All children of Adam born into the world, whatever their name or nation is, are corrupt, wicked, and defiled in the sight of God. Their thoughts, words, ways, and actions are all, more or less, defective and imperfect. Is there no country on the face of the earth where sin doesn't reign? Is there no happy valley, no secluded island, where innocence can be found? Is there no tribe on earth, far away from civilization, and commerce, and money, and weapons, and luxury, and books, where morality and purity flourish? No, dear friends: there is none. Look over all the voyages and travels you can lay your hand on, from Columbus down to Captain Cook, and you will see the truth of what I am asserting. The most isolated islands of the Pacific Ocean—islands cut off from all the rest of the world, islands where every person there are all ignorant of Rome and Paris, London and Jerusalem—these islands have been found to be full of impurity, cruelty, and idolatry. The footprints of the devil have been traced to every shore. The truthfulness of the third chapter of Genesis has been established everywhere. Whatever else savages have been found ignorant of, they have never been found ignorant of

sin.

But are there no men or women in the world who are free from this corruption of nature? Have there not been high and exalted souls who have every now and then lived faultless lives? Have there not been some, if it is only a few, who have done everything that God required, and thus proved that sinless perfection is a possibility? No, dear friends: there have been none. Look over all the biographies and lives of the holiest Christians; note how the brightest and best of Christ's people have always had the deepest sense of their own failures and corruption. They groan, they mourn, they sigh, they weep over their own shortcomings: it is one of the common grounds on which they meet. Patriarchs and Apostles, Early Church Fathers and Reformers, Luther and Calvin, Knox and Bradford, Rutherford and Bishop Hall, Wesley and Whitefield, Martyn and M'Cheyne—all are in total agreement in being totally aware of their own sinfulness. The more light they have, the more humble they seem to be; the more holy they are, the more they seem to feel their own unworthiness, and to glory, not in themselves, but in Christ.

Now what does all this seem to prove? In my mind it seems to prove that human nature is so tainted and corrupt that, left to himself, no man could be saved. Man's case appears to be a hopeless one without a mighty Savior. There must be a Mediator, an Atonement, an Advocate, to make such poor sinful creatures acceptable with God: and I find this nowhere, except in the person of Jesus Christ. Heaven for man without a mighty Redeemer, peace with God for man without a mighty Intercessor, eternal life for man without an eternal Savior—in one word, salvation without Christ—all appear to me to be utter impossibilities.

I lay these things before you, and ask you to consider them. I know it is one of the hardest things in the world to realize the sinfulness of sin. To say we are all sinners is one thing; to have an idea what sin must be in the sight of God is something else. Sin is too much a part of us to allow us to see it as it is: we don't feel our own moral deformity. We are like those animals in creation which are vile and loathsome to our senses, but are not so to themselves, nor yet to one another: their loathsomeness is their nature, and they don't perceive it. Our corruption is part and parcel of ourselves, and at our best we have only a feeble comprehension of its intensity. But this you can be sure of—if you could see your own lives with the eyes of the angels who never fell, you would never doubt this point for a moment. Depend on it, no one can really know what man is, and not see that the doctrine of our text must be true. There can be no salvation except though Christ.

(2) Let me say another thing. The doctrine of our text, that Jesus is the only way of salvation, must be true, because **God is what God is.** Now what is God? That is indeed a deep question. We know something of His attributes: He has not left Himself without witness in creation; He has mercifully revealed to us many things about Himself in His Word. We know that God is a Spirit—eternal, invisible, almighty—the Maker of all things, the Preserver of all things—holy, just, all-seeing, all-knowing, all-remembering— infinite in mercy, in wisdom, and in purity. But, what is sad, is how base and demeaning our greatest ideas are when we come to put down on paper what we believe God to be! How many words and expressions we use whose complete meaning we cannot understand! How many things our tongues say about God which our minds are utterly unable to conceive! How small a part of Him do we really see! How little of Him can we possibly know! How poor and worthless are any words of ours to convey any idea of Him who made this mighty world out of nothing, and with whom "one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day!" How weak and inadequate are our poor feeble intellects to conceive of Him who is perfect in all of His works—perfect in the greatest as well as perfect in the smallest, perfect in appointing the days and hours in which Jupiter, with all its satellites, will travel around the sun—perfect in forming the smallest insect that creeps over a few feet of our little globe! How little can our busy helplessness comprehend a Being who is always commanding and directing all things, in heaven and earth, by universal providence: controlling and directing the rise and fall of nations and dynasties, like Nineveh and Carthage; directing the exact length to which men like Alexander and Napoleon will extend their conquests; directing the smallest step in the life of the humblest believer among His people: all at the same time, all continuously, all perfectly—all for His own glory.

The blind man is no judge of the paintings of Rubens or Titian; the deaf man is insensible to the beauty of Handel's music; the person who lives in Greenland can have but a faint notion of the climate of the tropics; the Australian savage can only form in his mind a remote conception of a locomotive engine, however well you may describe it: there is no place in their minds to take in these things; they have no set of thoughts which can comprehend them; they have no mental fingers to grab hold of them. And, in just the same way, the best and brightest ideas that man can form of God, compared to the reality which we will one day see, are indeed weak and faint.

But, my friend, the one thing that I think is very clear is this: The more any one considers calmly who God really is, the more they must feel the immeasurable distance between God and themselves: the more they meditate, the more they must see that there is a great gulf between them and God. Their conscience, I think, will tell them, if they will let it speak, that God is perfect, and they are imperfect; that God is very high, and they are very low; that God is glorious majesty and they are nothing but a poor worm: and that if they are ever to stand before Him in judgment with any comfort, then they must have a mighty helper, or they will not be saved.

And what is all this but the very doctrine of our text? What is all this but coming around to the conclusion I am urging you to make? With such a person as God to give account to, we must have a mighty Savior. We must have an Almighty Friend and Advocate on our side—who can answer every charge that can be laid against us, and plead our cause with God on equal terms. We need this, and nothing less than this. Vague notions of mercy will never give true peace. And such a Savior, such a Friend, such an Advocate is nowhere to be found except in the person of Jesus Christ. I lay this reason before you. I well know that people may have false notions of God as well as everything else, and shut their eyes against the truth; but I say boldly and confidently, no man or woman can really have high and honorable views of who God is, and escape the conclusion that the doctrine of our text must be true. There can be no possible salvation except by Jesus Christ.

(3) Let me say, in the third place, this doctrine must be true, because **the Bible is what the Bible is.** All through the Bible, from Genesis down to Revelation, there is only one simple account of the way in which a man or woman must be saved. It is always the same: only by our Lord Jesus Christ—through faith; never by our own works and righteousness.

You see it dimly revealed at first: it looms through the mist of a few promises, but there it is. You see it more clearly later: it is taught by the pictures and symbols of the law of Moses. You have it still more clearly as time goes by: the Prophets saw in visions many particulars about the Redeemer that was to come.

Finally, you have the complete revelation, in the sunshine of New Testament history: Christ incarnate—Christ crucified —Christ rising again, Christ preached to the world. But *one golden thread runs through the whole Bible; no salvation except by Jesus Christ.* The bruising of the serpent's head predicted in the day of the fall; the clothing of our first parents with animal skins, the sacrifices of Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; the Passover, and all the particulars of the Jewish law—the high priest, the altar, the daily offering of the lamb, the holy of holies entered only by blood, the scapegoat, the cities of refuge—all are many witnesses to the truth set forth in the text: all preach with one voice, salvation only by Jesus Christ.

In fact, this truth appears to me to be the great focus of the Bible, and all the different parts and portions of the book are meant to pour light on it. I can gather from it no ideas of pardon and peace with God except in connection with this truth. *If I could read of one soul in it who was saved without faith in the Savior*, I might perhaps not speak so confidently. But when I see that faith in Christ —whether in a coming Christ or a crucified Christ—was the prominent feature in the religion of all who went to heaven; when I see Abel owning Christ in his better sacrifice, at one end of the Bible, and the saints in glory in John's vision rejoicing in Christ, at the other end of the Bible; when I see a man like Cornelius, who was devout, and feared God, and gave to the poor and prayed, told, in effect that in order to be saved, he was to send for Peter, and hear of Christ; when I see all these things I say, I feel bound to believe that the doctrine of the text is the doctrine of the whole Bible. No salvation, no way to heaven, except through Jesus Christ.

I don't know what use you make of your Bible—whether you read it or whether you don't—whether you read it all, or whether you only read the parts that you like; but this I tell you plainly, if you read and believe the whole Bible, you will find it hard to escape the doctrine that there is no salvation except through the person and blood of Jesus Christ. I don't see how you can consistently reject what I have been endeavoring to prove. Christ is the way, and the only way; Christ is the truth, and the only truth; Christ is the life, and the only life.

Such are the reasons which seem to me to confirm the truth laid down in our text. What man is—what God is—what the Bible is—all appear to me to lead us on to the same great conclusion: no possible salvation without Christ. I leave them with you, and move on.

III. And now, in the third and last place, let me show you some CONSEQUENCES which flow naturally out of our text. This is a critical part of our subject. The truth I have been trying to set before you is absolutely critical for mankind and I must speak of it with urgency. If Christ is the only way of salvation, what are we to feel about the many people in the world? This is the point I am now going to take up.

I believe that many persons would go with me as far as I have gone, and would go no further. They will allow my premises, but they will have nothing to do with my conclusions. They think it unloving to say anything which appears to condemn others. For my part I cannot understand such love: it seems to me the kind of love which would see a neighbor slowly drinking poison, but never intervene to stop him; a love which would allow migrants to embark in a leaky, un-seaworthy vessel, and not intervene to prevent them; a love which would see a blind man walking near a precipice, and think it wrong to cry out, and tell him there was danger.

I believe the greatest love is to tell the greatest quantity of truth. I believe it is a lack of love to hide the legitimate consequences of such a text as we are now considering, or to close our eyes to them. And I solemnly call on every one who really believes there is no salvation in anyone but Christ and no other name, given under heaven whereby we must be saved—I solemnly call on those persons to listen to me, while I set before them some of the tremendous consequences of our text.

One mighty consequence then, which seems to be learned from this text, is the utter uselessness of any religion without Christ. There are many to be found today who have this kind of religion. They would not like to be called Deists, but they are Deists. They believe that there is a God, that there is what they are pleased to call Providence, that God is merciful, that there will be a life after death—this is about the sum and substance of their creed; and as to the distinguishing tenets of Christianity, they don't seem to recognize them at all. Now I denounce such a system as a baseless fabric—its foundation is nothing but man's ideas—its hopes an utter delusion.

The god of such people is an idol of their own invention, and not the glorious God of the Scriptures—their god is a miserably imperfect creature: without holiness, without justice, without any attribute but that of vague indiscriminate mercy. Such a religion is nothing but a toy to play with: it is far too unreal to die with. It utterly fails to meet the needs of man's conscience: it offers no remedy; it affords no rest for the souls of men and women; it cannot comfort, for it cannot save. Beware of it if you love life. *Beware of a religion without Christ.*

Another consequence to be learned from the text is, the folly of any religion in which Christ is not given the first place. I need not remind you how many hold to a system of this kind. The Socinian tells us that Christ was a mere man; that His blood had no more efficacy or value than that of another; that His death on the cross was not a real atonement and propitiation of man's sins; and that, after all, one must work their way to heaven, and not just have faith. I solemnly declare that I believe such a system is disastrous to the souls of men and women. It seems to me to strike at the very root of the whole plan of salvation which God has revealed in the Bible, and practically to nullify the greater part of the Scriptures. It overthrows the priesthood of the Lord Jesus, and strips Him of His office; it converts the whole system of the law of Moses touching sacrifices and ordinances, into a meaningless form; it seems to say that the sacrifice of Cain was just as good as the sacrifice of Abel; it puts a man adrift on the sea of uncertainty, by taking from him the finished work of a divine Mediator.

Beware of Deism. If you love life, beware of the least attempt to depreciate and undervalue the person of Christ, and His offices and works. The only name by which you can be saved, is the name that is above every other name, and the slightest contempt poured on it is an insult to the King of Kings. The salvation of your soul has been established by God the Father on Christ, and no other; and if Christ were not God Himself, He never could accomplish it: there could be no salvation at all.

Another consequence to be learned from our text is the great error, committed by those who add anything to Christ, as being necessary to salvation. It is an easy thing to profess belief in the Trinity, and reverence for our Lord Jesus Christ, and yet to make some addition to Christ as the ground of hope, and so to overthrow the doctrine of the text as really and completely as by denying it altogether. The Roman Catholic Church does this systematically. She adds things over and above the requirements of the Gospel, by her own invention. She speaks as if Christ's finished work was not a sufficient foundation for a sinner's soul, and as if it were not enough to say, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved." She sends men and women to penances and absolution, to

masses and extreme unction, to fasting and bodily mortification, to the Virgin and the saints—as if these things could add to the safety there is in Christ Jesus. And in doing this she greatly sins against our text. Let us beware of any Roman Catholic additions to the simple way of the Gospel.

But I fear the Roman Catholic Church does not stand alone in this matter: I fear there are thousands of professing Protestants who are often erring in the same direction, although, of course, in a very different degree; they begin adding, perhaps without thinking, other names to the name of Christ, or attaching importance to them which they ought never receive. The ultra Churchman in England who thinks God's covenanted mercies are tied to a system of church government in which bishops are the chief clerics—the ultra Evangelical, who traces every evil in the Church to its connection with the State and denominations, and can talk of nothing but the independent system—the ultra Baptist, who shuts out from the Lord's table every one who has not received his views of baptism—the ultra Plymouth Brethren, who believes all knowledge resides within his own church, and condemns every one outside as a poor weak babe in Christ—all these, I say, however unwittingly, appear to me to have a most uncomfortable tendency to add to the doctrine of our text. All seem to me to be practically declaring that salvation is not to be found simply and solely in Christ; all seem to me to be practically adding another name to the name of Jesus whereby men and women must be saved—even the name of their own denomination and sect; all seem to me to be practically replying to the question, "What must I do to be saved?" not merely, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," but also "Come and join us."

Now I call upon every true Christian to beware of such extremism. In saying this I don't want to be misunderstood. I like everyone to be decided in his views of church matters, and to be fully persuaded of their correctness; all I ask is that you will *not put these things in the place of Christ*, or place them anywhere near Him, or speak of them as if you thought them needful to salvation. However dear to us our own particular views may be, let us beware of thrusting them in between the sinner and the Savior, let us beware, in short, of adding to the doctrine of the text. In the things of God's Word, let us remember that addition, as well as subtraction, is a great sin.

The last consequence which seems to me to be learned from our text is, the utter absurdity of supposing that we ought to be satisfied with a man's state of soul if he is *simply sincere*. This is a very common heresy indeed, and one against which we all need to be on our guard. There are thousands who say today, "We have nothing to do with the opinions of others. They may perhaps be mistaken, though it is possible they are right and we are wrong: but if they are sincere, we hope they will be saved, even as we are." And all this sounds tolerant and loving, and people like to believe their own views are also considered as such.

Now I believe such notions are entirely contradictory to the Bible, whatever else they may be. I cannot find in Scripture that any one ever got to heaven merely by sincerity, or was accepted with God if he was only earnest in maintaining his own views. The priests of Baal were sincere when they cut themselves with knives till the blood gushed out; but still that did not prevent Elijah from commanding them to be treated as wicked idolaters. Manasseh, King of Judah, was doubtless sincere when he burned his children in the fire to Moloch; but who doesn't know that he brought on himself great guilt by doing so. The apostle Paul, as a Pharisee, was sincere while he persecuted the Church, but when his eyes were opened he mourned over this as a special wickedness.

Let us beware of allowing for a moment that sincerity is everything, and that we have no right to speak against a man's spiritual state because of the sincere opinions he holds. On such principles, many atrocities committed in the name of religion might each and all be defended. However, they will not stand: they will not bear the test of Scripture. Once we allow such notions to be true, then you might as well throw your Bible away. *Sincerity is not Christ, and therefore sincerity cannot atone for sin.*

I am sure that these consequences sound very unpleasant to the minds of some. But I tell you of them advisedly and deliberately. I say calmly that *a religion without Christ, a religion that takes away from Christ, a religion that adds anything to Christ, a religion that puts sincerity in the place of Christ—all are dangerous:* all are to be avoided, and all are alike contrary to the doctrine of our text. You may not like this. You may think that I am unloving, narrow-minded, bigoted, and so forth: so be it. But you will not tell me my doctrine is not that of the Word of God. That doctrine is, salvation in Christ to the very uttermost—but without Christ there is no salvation at all.

I feel it a duty to bear my solemn testimony against the spirit of the day in which we live; to warn you against its infection. It is not Atheism I fear so much, in the present times, as Pantheism. It is not the system which says nothing is true, so much as the system which says everything is true; it is not the system which says there is no Savior, so much as the system which says there are many saviors and many ways to peace. It is the system which is so liberal that it dares not say anything is false; it is the system which is so loving that it will allow everything to be true; it is the system which seems ready to honor others as well as our Lord Jesus Christ and to class them all together. The system tells us not to condemn or to treat with disrespect the writings of Confucius and Zoroaster, Socrates and Mohammad, the Hindus of India and the African devil-worshippers, Arius and Pelagius, Ignatius Loyola and Socinus. It is the system which commands us to smile complacently on all creeds and systems of religion: the Bible and the Koran, the Hindu Veda and the old wives' tales of Rabbinical writers and the rubbish of the Early Church Fathers' traditions, and the book of Mormon by Joseph Smith—we are told to listen to them all: none are to be denounced as lies. It is the system which is so scrupulous about the feelings of others, that we are never to say that they are wrong; it is the system which is so liberal that it calls a man a bigot if he dares to say, "I know my views are right."

This is the world system, this is the tone of feeling which I fear this very day. This is the world system of today which I desire emphatically to testify against and denounce. What is it but a bowing down before a great idol specifically called liberality? What is it all but a sacrificing of truth upon the altar of a caricature of love? Beware of it, beware that the rushing stream of public opinion does not carry you away. Beware of it, if you believe the Bible. Has the Lord God spoken to us in the Bible, or has He not? Has He shown us the way of salvation plainly in that Bible, or has He not? Has He declared to us the dangerous state of all those who do not agree with the Holy Scriptures, or has He not? Focus your mind, and look these questions fairly in the face, and give them an honest answer. Tell us that there is some other inspired book beside the Bible, and then we will know what you mean; tell us that the whole Bible is not inspired, and then we will know where to meet you: but grant for a moment that the Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible, is God's truth, and then I don't know in what way you can escape the doctrine of the text. From the liberality which says everybody is right, from the love which forbids you to say anyone is wrong, from the peace which is bought at the expense of truth—may the good Lord deliver you!

I speak for myself: I find no resting-place between downright Evangelical Christianity and downright infidelity, whatever others may

find. I see no half-way house between them. I can see consistency in an infidel, however much I may pity him; I can see consistency in the full maintenance of Evangelical truth: but as to a middle course between the two—I cannot see it; and I say so plainly. Let it be called intolerant and unloving. I can hear God's voice nowhere except in the Bible, and I can see no salvation for sinners in the Bible except through Jesus Christ. In Him I see abundance: without Him I see none.

And as for those who hold to religions in which Christ is not everything, whoever they may be, I have a most uncomfortable feeling about their safety. I do not for a moment say that none of them are saved, but I say that those who are saved are saved by their disagreement with their own principles, and in spite of their own system. The man who wrote the famous line, "He can't be wrong whose life is in the right," was a great poet undoubtedly, but he was a wretched divine.

Let me conclude with a few words by way of APPLICATION. First of all, if there is no salvation except in Christ, make sure that you have an interest in that salvation yourself. Do not be content with hearing, and approving, and assenting to the truth, and going no further. Seek to have a personal interest in this salvation: lay hold by faith for your own soul; do not rest till you know and feel that you have gotten actual possession of that peace with God which Jesus offers, and that Christ is yours, and you are Christ's. If there were two, or three, or more ways of getting to heaven, there would be no necessity for pressing this matter upon you. But if there is only one way, you will hardly wonder that I say, "Make sure that you are in it."

Secondly, if there is no salvation except in Christ, then try to do good to the souls of all who do not know Him as a Savior. There are millions and millions in this miserable condition—millions in foreign lands, millions in your own country, millions who are not trusting in Christ. You ought to feel for them if you are a true Christian; you ought to pray for them; you ought to work for them, while there is yet time. Do you really believe that Christ is the only way to heaven? Then live as if you believed it. Look around the circle of your own relatives and friends: count them up one by one, and think how many of them are not yet in Christ. Try to do good to them in some way or other: act as a man or woman should act who believes his friends to be in danger. Do not be content with their being kind and sociable, gentle and good-tempered, moral, and courteous; be unhappy about them till they come to Christ, and trust in Him: for you ought to be distressed over their condition. Leave no one alone who is without Christ—take every opportunity to reaching them. I know all this may sound like enthusiasm and fanaticism. I wish there was more of it in the world: anything, I am sure, is better than a quiet indifference about the souls of others, as if everybody was on their way to heaven. Nothing, to my mind, so proves our little faith, as our lack of feelings about the spiritual condition of those around us.

Thirdly, if there is no salvation except in Christ, let us love all who love the Lord Jesus with sincerity, and exalt Him as their Savior, whoever they may be. Let us not draw back, because they do not see eye to eye with us in everything. Whether a person is an Independent, a Wesleyan or a Baptist, let us love them if they truly love Christ, and gives Christ His rightful place. We are all traveling fast towards a place where names and forms and Church government will be nothing, and Christ will be everything: let us get ready for that place now, by loving all who are in the way that leads to it. This is true love: to believe all things and hope all things, so long as we see Bible doctrines maintained and Christ exalted. Christ must be the single standard by which all opinions must be measured. Let us honor all who honor Him: but let us never forget that the same apostle Paul who wrote about love, also says, "If any man does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be cursed." If our love and tolerance are wider than that of the Bible, they are worth nothing at all: indiscriminate love is no love at all, and indiscriminate approval of all religious opinions, is only a new name for infidelity. Let us hold out our right hand to all who love the Lord Jesus, but let us beware how we go beyond this.

Lastly, if there is no salvation except by Christ, then you must not be surprised if ministers of the Gospel preach a lot about Him. We cannot tell you too much about the name which is above every name: you cannot hear of Him too often. You may hear too much about controversy in our sermons—you may hear too much of men and books, of works and duties, of forms and ceremonies, of sacraments and ordinances—but there is one subject which you never hear too much of: you can never hear too much of Christ.

When we become tired of preaching Christ, then we are false ministers: when you are wearied of hearing of Him, your souls are in an unhealthy state. When we have preached Him all our lives, the half of His excellence will remain untold. When you see Him face to face in the day of His appearing, you will find there was more in Him than your heart ever conceived.

Let me leave you with the words of an old writer, to which I desire humbly to subscribe. "I know no true religion but Christianity; no true Christianity but the doctrine of Christ: the doctrine of His divine person, of His divine office, of His divine righteousness, and of His divine Spirit, which all that are His must believe. I know no true ministers of Christ but such as make it their business, in their calling, to commend Jesus Christ, in His saving fullness of grace and glory, to the faith and love of men and women; no true Christian but one united to Christ by faith and love, unto the glorifying of the name of Jesus Christ, in the beauty of Gospel holiness. Ministers and Christians of this spirit have been for many years my brothers, sisters, and friends, and I hope shall ever be, wherever the hand of God shall lead me." Amen.

ENOCH walking with God

by J. C. Ryle

"**Enoch** walked with God, and he was not—for God took him." Gen. 5:24.

You all wish to go to heaven. I know it. I am fully persuaded of it. I am certain of it. There is not one of you, however false may be his views of what he must believe and what he must do, however unscriptural the ground of his hope, however worldly-minded he may be, however careless when he gets outside that church door—there is not one of you, I say, who does not wish to go to heaven when he dies. But I do sadly fear that many of you, without a mighty change, will never get there! You would like the crown—but you do not like the cross! You would like the glory—but not the grace! You would like the happiness—but not the holiness! You would like the peace—but not the truth! You would like the victory—but not the fight! You would like the reward—but not the labor! You would like the harvest—but not the ploughing! You would like the reaping—but not the sowing! And so I fear that many of you will never get to heaven!

Well, you may say—"These are sharp words, this is hard teaching! We would like to know what sort of people they are, who will be saved." I shall give you a short and very general answer. Those who have the same faith as those holy men whose names are recorded in the Bible—those who walk in that same narrow path which all the saints of God have trodden—such people, and only such—shall have eternal life and never enter into condemnation.

Indeed, beloved, there is but one way to heaven; and in this way every redeemed soul that is now in Paradise has walked. This is the way you must yourselves be content to follow; and if you are really wise, if you really love life, as you profess to do, you will take every opportunity of examining the characters of those who have gone before you, you will mark the principles on which they acted, you will note the end they had in view, you will try to profit by their experience, you will follow them so far as they followed Christ.

Now, I purpose this morning to speak to you about the history of Enoch, who was one of the first among those who by faith and patience have inherited the promises; and I shall divide what I have to say upon the subject into four parts.

I. What was the character of the age in which he lived?

II. What was his own character?

III. What was the leading motive or principle which influenced him?

IV. What was his end?

God grant that you may all be stirred up to a diligent inquiry into your own state; may many of you, hearing how Enoch walked with God, be led to pray, "Lord, I would walk with You (I have sinned—but I repent in dust and ashes), Lord Jesus, I would be Yours, create in me a clean heart, guide me with Your counsel, and afterward bring me unto glory."

I. What was the character of the age in which Enoch lived? Now, respecting the age when Enoch lived, we know little—but that little is very bad. He was the seventh from Adam, and lived in the time before the flood. In those days, we are told, the earth was corrupt before God, and filled with violence. Every sort of wickedness seems to have prevailed; men walked after the vile lusts of their hearts, and did that which appeared good to them without fear and without shame. The children of Cain, after he murdered Abel, as far as we can learn, made no attempt whatever to keep God in their thoughts—like the prodigal son, they went afar off from Him and gave themselves up to worldly employments, as if they would keep the Lord out of their minds as much as possible. They got fame as founders of cities, like men who looked upon this earth as their home, and set all their affection on things below and had no desire after the new Jerusalem above, the city of the Lord God and of the Lamb. They became famous and skillful in all the works of this life: one was called the father of shepherds, and another the father of musicians—but we read of none that was a father of faithful lambs in Christ's flock, of none that was a father of children who made God's statutes their song in the house of their pilgrimage. And another was a teacher of artificers in brass and iron—but we do not hear of any who taught the good knowledge of the Lord. In short, they were all clever in finding out how to be rich and how to be merry and how to be powerful—but they were not wise unto salvation, there was nothing of God and His fear and His service among them.

Such were the children of Cain; and they seem to have been such pleasant company, so little disposed to trouble other people by talking about the soul and heaven and hell, that nearly everybody took after them, and the world was tainted and infected with their manners; insomuch that the few who still clung to the true God became separated from the rest by a line of distinction: they began to be called by the name of the Lord.

But even this separation did not last long. We are next told, that they who professed to be the sons of God began to think there was no harm in marrying people who cared nothing about true religion; they chose wives who were unbelievers—beautiful and agreeable, no doubt—but still enemies of God—and (as it has almost always proved when a Christian has been united to one that is not a Christian), the bad soon corrupted the good—or else the good did not convert the bad, and the families that were born of these unions proved earthly, sensual, and devilish; and in a short time the whole world was full of sin.

Consider, beloved, what a fearful proof you have here of the natural bent of man's heart towards wickedness! They had the recollection of God's anger against transgression fresh upon their minds; they had Paradise before their eyes, they had the angels of God keeping the way of the tree of life with flaming swords; and yet, in spite of all this, they sinned with a high hand. They went on much as the world likes to do now: they ate, they drank, they planted, they built, they bought, they sold, they made light of warnings. "What have we to do with the Lord?" they thought; "let us enjoy ourselves while we can." But God will not be mocked, and though He bore with them long and exhorted them by His servants, He dealt with them at last according to their works. And just as He will one day send the fire upon this earth, so did He send the waters of the deep: the flood came and cut them off in the middle of their revellings, and drowned the whole world—except for eight people.

Such was the character of the men before the flood; and in the middle of this age of wickedness Enoch lived, and Enoch walked with God. There were no Bibles then, no Prayer-books, no religious tracts, no churches, no ministers, no sacraments. Christ had never been seen; the way of salvation had never been clearly made known; the gospel was only seen dimly in the distance; it was not fashionable to think about religion, it was not fashionable to worship God at all, there was nothing to encourage people to make a profession. Yet in the middle of this wicked and adulterous generation this saint of the Most High did live! Enoch walked with God. It is almost impossible to imagine a more splendid proof of what grace can do for a weak, sinful man than is to be found in these words; in the world before the flood "Enoch walked with God."

II. I promised in the second place to tell you something about **Enoch's character.** You have heard he walked with God, and you know, perhaps, it is an expression of great praise—but I may not leave you here without trying to give you a clear notion of its meaning. People often get a habit of using words without exactly knowing what they mean, and a very bad habit it is. Now, I say that this walking with God has many different senses; it is an expression full of matter.

A man that walks with God is one of ***God's friends***. That unhappy enmity and dislike which men naturally feel towards their Maker has been removed; he feels perfectly reconciled and at peace. How indeed can two walk together except they be agreed? He does not hide himself from the Lord, like Adam in the trees of the garden—but he seeks to be in constant communion with Him; he is not as

many who are uncomfortable at the idea of being alone with God—for he is never perfectly happy excepting in His company; he feels that he cannot be too much with Him, because he desires to be of the same mind, to think like Him, to act like Him, to be conformed to His image. Such a one was Enoch.

Again, he who walks with God is one of ***God's dear children***. He looks upon Him as his Father, and as such he loves Him, he reveres Him, he rejoices in Him, he trusts Him in everything. He makes it his constant study to please Him, and whenever he has offended, he sorrows over his offence with a true childlike sorrow. He thinks that God knows better than himself what is good for him, and so in everything that happens—sickness or health, sorrow or joy, riches or poverty—he says to himself, "It is well: my Father sends this." Such a one was Enoch.

Again, he who walks with God is one of ***God's witnesses***. He never hesitates to stand forward on the Lord's side. He is not content with giving his own heart to God—but he is also ready and willing to bear his testimony in public on behalf of the cause of righteousness and truth. He is not ashamed to let men know whose servant he is; he will not be turned aside from raising his voice against sin for fear of giving offence. Such a one was Enoch. His lot was cast in evil days—but did he join the multitude? Did he walk in the way of sinners? Did he hold his peace and say, I can do nothing? Far from it! He thought not what his neighbors liked—but what his Lord required. He sought not to please the world—but to please God; and therefore, living in the midst of sin and corruption, he was separate from it. He was a witness against it; he was as the salt of the earth; he was as a light shining in a dark place.

Ay, and he was a plain speaker, too. He made no excuse about youth and temptation; he did not let men go to hell for fear of being thought uncharitable—but he told them openly of their danger; and when they were living wickedly and carelessly, as if there was no God and no devil, he said, as the apostle Jude relates, "The Lord is coming with ten thousand of His saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly of their ungodly deeds." No doubt he was thought a troubler of the people, and a disagreeable man—but he was a witness, and so he declared continually: "The Lord is coming"; whether you will hear or whether you will forbear, there shall be a day of judgment, sin shall not always go unpunished—repent, for the Lord is coming! This was the theme of his testimony. He walked with God, and so he was a faithful witness.

But I say further, to walk with God is to **walk in *God's ways***, to follow the laws He has given for our guidance, to look on His precepts as our rule and our counselor, to esteem all His commandments concerning all things to be right; to fear turning aside from the narrow path He has set before us for one single instant; to go straightforward, though all things seem against us, remembering the word on which He has caused us to hope.

And to walk with God is to **walk in the light of God's countenance**; to live as men who remember that all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do, that the darkness is no darkness with Him, and remembering this, to aim at never thinking or saying or doing anything we should be ashamed of—in the presence of the great Searcher of hearts.

And to walk with God is to **walk after the Spirit**—to look to the Holy Spirit as our Teacher, to lean on Him for strength, to put no confidence in the flesh, to set our affections on things above, to wean them from things on earth, to be spiritually-minded.

But truly, beloved, I might keep you here all day, and yet the half would not be told of the things which are contained in walking with God. To walk with God is to walk humbly confessing ourselves unworthy of the least of all His mercies, acknowledging that we have no power of ourselves to help ourselves, that we are constantly coming short and backsliding, that we are unprofitable servants, and without His grace are sure to fall. It is to walk circumspectly, bearing in mind our besetting sins and temptations, and avoiding all places and companies and employments in which we are likely to be assailed by them. It is to walk in love towards all, both God and man, full of the mind that is in our heavenly Father, kind and affectionate and gentle to everyone, yes, even to the unthankful and the evil. To walk with God is to serve Him as a habit, continually; we are not to walk with Him on a Sunday and forget Him on a weekday; we are not to walk with Him in public but not in private; we are not to walk with Him before ministers and good men only—but in our own families and before our own household.

And lastly, to walk with God is to be always going forward, always pressing on, never standing still and flattering ourselves that we are the men and have borne much fruit—but to grow in grace, to go on from strength to strength, to forget the things which are behind, and if by grace we have attained unto anything, to abound yet more and more.

Beloved, this is a very faint picture of a walk with God—but time will not allow me to draw another stroke. This was some part of Enoch's character; this was in some degree the meaning of the record God has given us about him.

Oh, it is a simple but a weighty record! No doubt there were many great and many wise and many noble in those days—but all we know of them is that they lived and they died and they begat sons and daughters. Of Enoch only is it written that he walked with God. Oh, this walk with God, beloved! It is the only talent which will never fail us, the only treasure which will prove eternal, the only character which will serve us beyond the grave; and in the day when names and titles and honors shall sink to nothing, and all shall stand upon a level, the poorest and the humblest in the land shall be more highly honored than the mighty and the rich, if he has walked with God and they have not; the first shall be last and the last first.

Comfort, comfort, all who belong to Christ's little flock! Comfort, all who are thinking first about your souls; others may live in courts and palaces and have the praise of this world—but of you it shall be written in the books of heaven, "They walked with God"; the King of kings and Lord of lords was their Shepherd, their Guide, their Companion, their familiar Friend, and your joy shall no man take away.

III. I must now say a few words about **Enoch's motive**. He walked with God; and you will ask me, "What was the secret cause of it, what was the hidden spring and principle which influenced him, that we may go forth and do likewise?" Beloved, God has told us plainly in the Epistle to the Hebrews—it was faith. Faith was the seed which bore such goodly fruit; faith was the root of his holiness and decision on the Lord's side—faith without which there has never been any salvation, faith without which not one of you will ever enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Now this faith is no mystery; it is neither more nor less than a thorough belief of the heart.

Enoch believed that as a child of Adam he was himself born a sinner and deserving of nothing but wrath and condemnation; he believed that his first parents had forfeited all right to eternal life, and that he as one of their descendants had inherited a heart deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. He did not merely look upon himself as naturally very thoughtless and liable to be led away by bad company, and the like, as many of you are content to do. But he went further, he looked within and laid the blame on the corrupt fountain of his own heart; he really believed himself to be a miserable sinner.

But **Enoch believed that God had graciously provided a way of salvation, that He had appointed a great Redeemer to bear our sins** and carry our transgressions and bruise the serpent's head. He saw clearly that without this he had not the slightest chance of being saved, whatever he might do; he looked far forward, and in his mind's eye he saw a long way off the Messiah that was yet to come to pay the ransom of the world, and he built all his hopes on Him. Enoch believed in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And **Enoch believed that God was a God of perfect holiness**, "of purer eyes than to behold iniquity." He never held with those who said, "You are righteous overmuch, the Lord will not be so very particular, we need not be so very strict, men cannot be always keeping watch over themselves;" for he trembled at the thought of allowing himself in any shadow of impurity or unrighteousness; and though he never dreamed of setting up his own works as anything of worth, though he rejoiced in the hope of salvation by free grace, still he believed that he who walks with God and would have eternal life must be holy even as He is holy.

And **Enoch believed that God would one day come to judge the world** and give to all men according to their works. Though iniquity abounded and the love of many waxed cold, and all things seemed to go on as if God took no notice of this earth, he still believed the Lord would come to take account in such an hour as no one expected Him; in faith he saw the judgment close at hand, and he walked with God as one waiting for it. He lived as if he felt this present world was not his rest; he looked beyond the things which are seen—to that abiding city which remains for the people of God; by faith he saw that heaven was his only home and in the Lord's presence alone was fullness of joy. Such was the ruling principle which possessed this holy man of old. Oh that you would pray earnestly for a like precious faith! Without it you will never walk in Enoch's way, and so you will never come to Enoch's end.

IV. And this leads me, in the last place, to speak about **Enoch's end.** We are simply informed in the text that "He was not—for God took him." The interpretation of this is, that God was pleased to interfere in a special manner on His servant's behalf, and so He suddenly removed him from this world without the pains of death, and took him to that blessed place where all the saints are waiting in joyful expectation for the end of all things, where sin and pain and sorrow are no more.

And this, no doubt, was done for several reasons. It was done to convince a hard-hearted, unbelieving world that God does observe the lives of men and will honor those who honor Him. It was done to show every living soul that Satan had not won a complete victory when he deceived Eve; that men may yet get to heaven by the way of faith, and although in Adam all die, still in Christ all may be made alive. Yes, beloved, Enoch walked with God, and so God took him. Here was a splendid and a comforting assurance that the Lord's eye is upon all His children, that there is a heaven and a life to come, that there is a reward for the righteous, though men may laugh at them, and their walk is not fashionable, and their way is spoken against and their seriousness is despised. Oh, cast not away your confidence, you who walk with God: it is but a little season and He who shall come will come, and take you to an everlasting rest.

And now, beloved, I do beseech you all, if you care about your souls—if you really desire to go to heaven—if you really have the slightest wish to die in peace, and rise in glory, and join the company of the just—I do beseech you ask yourselves the question, "Am I walking with God? Am I in that way which Enoch and all the saints have walked in? How many among you have one grain of that living faith which guided this holy man's feet into the way of peace?

Would you have me suppose they are walking with God who live in any known sin which the Bible condemns? Are they walking with God who regard Him and His service in the second place—and the care of this world's matters in the first? Are they who never think, and say to each other "Never mind all this pious concern—I dare say we shall be right at last"? Are they who neglect any means of grace which God has placed within their reach—or let the most trifling excuse prevent their using it? Are they who profess to know the Lord and believe in Jesus—but do not make Jesus their example? Oh! no, no! It is impossible; all such must be walking away from God; day after day they get farther from Him, and at last, unless they turn, they will walk into hell!

And when I see men going towards this place of torment—for all must be who are not walking with God—when I see the loving and tender-hearted Lord Jesus holding out His hands and saying, "Come unto Me: why will you die? I can and will cleanse you from all sin!" When I see all this, and find you cold and undecided, and flattering yourselves you are in a middle path and tolerably safe, I must cry aloud and spare not, and run the risk of being thought uncharitable, if by any means I may awaken you and deliver you from the power of Satan and guide you unto Christ. Oh that your hearts may be stirred within you, that you may never rest until you are in Enoch's way and have some portion of Enoch's faith!

Think not to put off the question by saying these things cannot be true. Go to your Bibles and see what they testify. They that are utterly deceived and blind may tell you that punishment is not eternal, and hell is a delusion, and the devil a lie—but they will find to their cost they are all true, most fearfully true, and so long as you attend a Christian ministry, you must not expect to hear of any other way than that which Enoch took.

Think not to say, "We cannot walk with God: we mean well in church—but when we get outside the world lays hold upon us, and acquaintances and evil company turn us aside." Oh, be honest with yourselves! This is as much as saying "If all the world be pious we will be pious too—and not until then"; in the meanwhile you do not like to be singular, you cannot make up your minds to be in earnest, you think I may be mistaken, you will go with the stream, you will walk according to the course of this world. But look at Enoch: his heart was naturally like yours; the same grace which strengthened him can strengthen you—the Lord's hand is not shortened; by grace he walked with God three hundred years, and surely you may trust the power of God will keep you also through faith unto salvation for seventy years. But know that if you are not saints on earth—you never can be saints in heaven.

Think not I am shutting you up without hope. What though it be true that few are saved and the way is narrow? There is nothing to prevent any of you entering it, except your own unwillingness, your own unbelieving hearts, your own indifference. Oh, begin to walk as Enoch did! Come to the Lord Jesus Christ! He who comes to Him shall never hunger, he who believes on Him shall never thirst:

though your past life may have been that of Esau or Manasseh or Judas or Mary Magdalen, come to Him repenting of everything, and He will never cast you out. Take with you words; and say, "Lord Jesus, I have sinned; I do repent, I put all my trust in you. Lord receive me, Lord increase my faith," and then the word of God is my warrant for saying He shall give you His Holy Spirit, and you shall walk with Him and before Him and after Him, and rest with Him.

Are you who are elderly! Walk with God—and be in haste—your next step may be in hell! Thank the Lord you are not there yet. You have but a short time; you hang by a slender thread! The Jordan of death is before you, and you will never cross in safety unless the ark is with you, and the ark is only with those who walk with God.

Are you young? Then walk with God, and be in haste. Do not put it off a single day. Young people die as well as old. Young people have precious souls to save as well as others. The devil, who rejoices to see so many of you neglecting private prayers and private reading of the Bible, has an especial eye to you: he knows if he can only prevent you thinking while you are young, he has a better chance of making you his own forever.

O let it not be written of you in the books of God that on this Sabbath day you came together not for the better but for the worse; you were invited to walk with God, and would not: let it not be in vain you have heard this history of one of the Lord's elect—but cast aside your old habits, arise to newness of life, even as the face of the fair country around you is renewed at this season of the year; and be followers of Enoch—even as he followed God.

Remember, all of you, the prophecy he spoke: "the Lord is coming to execute judgment." This earth, lovely and fair and shining as it seems, shall be burned up—but your soul shall live forever, either in heaven or in hell! This very Church shall crumble into dust—but those who sleep in its cemeteries shall rise again, bone shall come together unto bone, and all stand before the throne and be judged according to their lives. The Lord grant you may all find mercy in that day—but if you would find it, you must walk with God, and then indeed you shall live by faith and sleep in Jesus—and have your portion with the spirits of just men made perfect.

SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS

by J. C. Ryle

"He told this parable to some who trusted in themselves, that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt." (Luke 18:9)

Are there none to whom this parable is applicable in the present day? Truly, if it were so, the ministers of Jesus would have comparatively a light employment and an idle post. We do not often meet with men who deny the divinity of Christ—or the personality of the Holy Spirit—or disbelieve the Bible—or doubt the existence of a God, and so bring upon themselves swift destruction. But, alas! We have daily proof that the disease spoken of in our text is as deep-seated and hard to cure as ever, and of all the mischievous delusions that keep men out of heaven, of all the soul-destroying snares that Satan employs to oppose Christ's Gospel, there is none we find so dangerous, none so successful, as self-righteousness!

Perhaps you think this strange, and I dare say there are few who would not say, if asked the ground of their hopes, and how they expect to be saved, "We trust in the merits of Christ." But I fear that too many of you are making the Lord Jesus but half your Savior, and could never stand the sifting of an inquiry which would draw out into daylight the secrets of your hearts. How much would then come out by degrees about 'doing as well as you could', and 'being no worse than others', and 'having been sober and industrious and well-behaved', and 'having attended church regularly', and 'having had a Bible and a Prayer book of your own ever since you can remember', and the like; besides many other self-approving thoughts, which often never appear until a death-bed. And all prove the root of all evil, which is pride, to be still vigorous and flourishing within.

Oh this pride of heart, beloved!—it is fearful to see the harm that it does, and the carelessness with which it is regarded. It is melancholy indeed to think of a man, weak frail man, the descendant of fallen Adam, the inheritor of a corrupt nature, forgetting his own countless sins, shortcomings and backslidings, trusting in himself, and despising those who are his brethren according to the flesh. And wisely has our Lord spoken the parable immediately following my text—"Two men went up to the temple complex to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee took his stand and was praying like this: 'God, I thank You that I'm not like other people—greedy, unrighteous, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of everything I get.' "But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even raise his eyes to heaven but kept striking his chest and saying, 'God, turn Your wrath from me—a sinner!' I tell you, this one went down to his house justified rather than the other; because everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted." (Luke 18:10-14).

Observe now how much more striking the lesson sounds when conveyed to us in the form of an example. How little many people would have been affected if our Lord had given a general discourse about the 'evil of pride' and the 'excellence of humility'; about the danger of formality and the importance of a truly penitent frame of mind, if he had merely said, "Be not self-righteous in your dealings with God—but be lowly and self-abased!" And how much more are our hard hearts likely to be moved when we see, as it were, living specimens of two sorts of worshipers, placed vividly before our eyes!

May God the Holy Spirit direct the instruction here contained to the awakening of the self-righteous, to the comfort of those who labor and are heavy-laden, and to the edification of all!

Now, before entering closely into the parable, I would have you mark, that the first verse tells us there was one point on which the Pharisee and the tax collector were agreed—one point which they had in common, and one only—and this was, "They both went up into the temple to pray." They both set their faces the same way, they walked in the same path, they entered the same house, and so far we can discover no difference whatever between them, in their outward behavior at least. But we shall soon find that their hearts were far asunder, and like the first worshipers recorded in the Bible, even Cain and Abel, there was a mighty gulf between them—for

God, we shall see, accepted the sacrifice of the one—but rejected that of the other.

Oh, beloved, this passage suggests very solemn reflections, and for our sakes no doubt it was written. Both these men, it appears, "went up to the temple to pray," and yet how fearfully the narrative ends! Jesus had just been speaking of the necessity of constant prayer, in the parable of the unjust judge, and immediately, without anything happening to break the thread of his discourse, he adds the parable we are now considering. Surely, then, this must be meant to remind us, as a thing we are liable to forget, that, however important prayer may be, we are not to suppose all who pray have a godly spirit; and that outward service is often given where there is no real dedication of the heart to God.

Truly it is cheerful and encouraging to see a multitude going up to the house of God—but still it is painful to remember that too many go in the spirit of the Pharisee, and far too few in that of the Tax collector. They all use the same prayers, they bow the knee, they move the lips together, and yet they are as widely different as gold and base metal. All are not Israel, who are called Israel. All are not Christians who name the name of Christ. All are not acceptable worshipers who are found in the temples of the Most High.

And what is the line of distinction? We learn this in the parable. Some come as Pharisees, and some as tax collectors; some appear with a broken and a contrite heart, such as the Lord will not despise, and others with an unhumbled and self-exalting spirit, wise in their own eyes and pure in their own sight—the sacrifice of all such is abominable in the sight of God. Oh that you would try to bear in mind more constantly, that "the Lord sees not as man sees, for man looks on the outward appearance—but the Lord looks on the heart"; that to Him "all hearts are open, all desires known, and from Him no secrets are hidden!" And if you felt this more, you would be more careful about the spirit in which you draw near to His throne, you would avoid anything like vain or trifling conversation both before and after service, and so observe the advice of Solomon—to guard your steps when you go to the house of God."

Let us, however, return to the parable from which I have turned aside. I have shown you that there was one point in common between the tax collector and the Pharisee; and I shall now proceed to call your attention to the main object of the parable, by tracing out distinctly the **four great points of difference** which we perceive existed between these fellow-worshipers. I observe, then,

I. There was a difference in their character.

II. There was a difference in their behavior.

III. There was a difference in their prayers.

IV. And, lastly, there was a difference in the reception their prayers met with.

I. There was a difference in their CHARACTER. The parable—or rather narrative, for it is probably a true story, adapted by our Lord to the purpose of the moment—begins by stating that "One was a Pharisee, the other a tax collector." Now, it is almost impossible to imagine a more striking contrast, in the opinion of a Jewish congregation. The PHARISEES were the strictest sect among the Jews: "I was of the strictest sect of the Pharisees," says Paul. They prayed often—which was very right—but they also made long prayers for a pretense, and they would pray at the corners of the streets where two roads met, that they might be seen by people going and coming both ways and so get a name for uncommon sanctity. There is no reason for supposing they were generally anything but moral men—but their grand fault was that they relied on their good works, as a ground of acceptance before God. They seem to have been indifferent as to the real state of their hearts, and to have cared only for keeping up a fair appearance before men, for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.

We may get some idea of their real character from our Lord's saying, that they gave tithe of mint, anise, and cummin, while they neglected the weightier matters of the law—justice, mercy and truth; and from His comparison of them to whitened sepulchers, which outwardly appear beautiful before men—but inwardly are filled with dead men's bones and all corruption. They "made broad the borders of their phylacteries," they had pieces of parchment sewed to the edge of their long robes, on which some texts of Scripture were written, that people might see them and infer that they were great lovers of the law of God. They were very strict about outward purifications, and set great value on the washing of pots, brazen vessels and tables, and many other such-like things that they did. They were particularly zealous for the traditions of the fathers, and for the observation of the rites and ceremonies of the Church, and yet they often made the law of God void by their traditions. They were exceeding exact in the outward observation of the Sabbath—so much so that they called our Lord a sinner, and said he was not of God, because on the Sabbath day He had healed a man who was born blind.

And for all these reasons they were held in high esteem by the people; for men always prefer the things of sight to the things of faith, and think more of outward service than of heart; they had the uppermost places in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces, and were called of men Rabbi. In short, they got such a reputation for piety, that it became a proverb among the Jews, that if there were but two men saved, one of them must be a Pharisee.

Such were the Pharisees. But what was the character given to the TAX COLLECTORS? It was very different in every respect. They were generally Jews who were employed to collect the Roman taxes. And as the Jews always disliked to pay tribute to the Gentiles, their office as tax collectors was looked upon as disgraceful and disreputable. Besides this, it is pretty clear that they used to exact much more than their due, and to amass much wealth by false accusations, to the great disgust of their fellow-countrymen. On these accounts they were so universally notorious, that our Lord Himself tells His disciples that if any man would not listen to the church, he must be to them as a heathen man and a tax collector. The enemies of Jesus thought it a heavy charge against Him that He was a friend of tax collectors and sinners; and in one place we find the tax collectors and harlots mentioned together, as people of like reputation.

On the whole, then, we may fairly conclude that in teaching the nature of acceptable worship, our Lord could not have chosen two examples more unlike each other than a Pharisee and a tax collector. One is of great repute with his fellow-creatures, while the other is peculiarly offensive—but which will God accept? We shall soon see.

II. Let us in the second place consider **the different BEHAVIOR of these two worshipers.** Behold the Pharisee. "He stood and prayed thus with himself." Observe this: he went to some conspicuous part of the temple, where he could stand alone near the altar,

separate from the rest of men, that all might see what a devout man he was, and not lose sight of him in the crowd. He stood "with himself," not among the congregation, lest he should be defiled by touching them; he was too good for them. We do not read of anything like humility here; we do not learn that he even bowed his head, as a mark of respect to his Creator—but there he stood erect, like one who felt that he had done all that God required of him, that he had no sin to repent of, that he had a right to expect a blessing as a profitable servant.

Turn now to the tax collector. "Standing afar off, he would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven—but smote upon his bosom." He stood afar off probably in the outward court, as one who did not feel himself worthy to come beyond the threshold of Him whose name is Holy. "He would not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven." He felt the remembrance of his sins so grievous, and the burden of them so intolerable, that, like a child who has offended its father, he dare not look his Almighty Maker in the face. "He smote upon his bosom." He could not control the feelings that arose in his mind: he recollected the mercies he had received and his own neglect of them, the life he had led and the God he had despised; and, like those who saw Jesus hanging on the cross, "he smote his bosom," in sorrow, self-abasement and godly fear. Beloved, the posture of the body and the expression of the face are certainly not always sure signs of the state of a man's heart—but you may rest assured that a truly humble and devout worshiper will generally be distinguished by his conduct in the house of God.

He who is duly sensible of his own guilt, and is ever coming to Jesus as his Advocate; he who is acquainted with the sinfulness of sin and the devices of Satan, and the value of the means of grace and the necessity of using them if he would save his soul—such a one will never show any lack of reverence, any levity or carelessness of manner, when he has entered any place where prayer is accustomed to be made and the gospel preached, and Christ Himself is standing in the midst. But if a person comes to church with an air of indifference, as if he did the minister a favor by coming and cared not if he never came again, and does not join in the prayers, and looks as if he would be ashamed if any one thought he did, and does not listen to the word of God, and does not pay attention to the sermon; if he employs himself with looking at other people's dress—or deliberately goes to sleep—or talks to his neighbors—or makes plans for the next week—he may have his own reasons for coming here—but it is pretty clear to me that he does not come in the way that Jesus loves, as a miserable sinner who sees nothing but evil in himself, nor in the spirit that Jesus loves, that is in the spirit of the tax collector.

III. In the third place let us attend to **the difference in the PRAYERS of these two characters.** Hear the PHARISEE: "God, I thank you that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers—or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week, I give tithes of all I possess." Mark these words: there is no expression of any need here; he seems perfectly self-satisfied; he recites complacently what he is not, and he proudly brings forward what he is. Remember, beloved, there is ground for much thankfulness if God enables us to resist gross sins—but then there is no excuse for boasting. None of us have anything which we did not receive, and we cannot do better than follow the example of Paul, who said, "By the grace of God I am what I am."

But the Pharisee had none of this spirit. He was wrong on every point. He was wrong in supposing, as he evidently did, that his own power and strength had kept him from these vices; he was wrong in believing that he could lay any claim to the title of a perfect observer of the law on these points. It is one thing to keep God's commandments in the letter, and another to keep them in the spirit. The one may think they do, like this Pharisee—but the other no man ever did but our Lord Jesus Christ. "In many things we offend all," says James. "Who can tell how often he offends? O cleanse me from my secret faults," is the language of the psalmist.

Lastly, he was wrong in supposing that his external fulfilment of the law would give him a title to justification in the sight of God. Salvation is all of grace, not of works, lest any man should boast. "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh living be justified."

But the Pharisee, besides this, was especially wrong in going out of his way to make unnecessary and uncharitable remarks upon the tax collector. He talks like one who had no account to settle about his own soul; he assumes as a matter of course that the tax collector was more vile in God's sight than himself. And he proves himself a child of the devil by usurping Satan's office—he becomes an accuser of his brethren. "I am not as other men are—or even as this tax collector."

Beloved, I must call your particular attention to this language, for I declare unto you with grief that I have heard people say things, which in effect are very much the same about themselves, who yet profess and call themselves Christians. Many say, if they are urged about their own sinfulness in God's sight, "Well, at any rate I am no worse than my neighbors: I am thankful I do not drink, like such a one next door. I am no fornicator, like such a one down the way. I do not miss church altogether, like such a one who lives down the road." Listen to me, I beseech you: is not this the very mind of the Pharisee? You are not to be judged by the standard of those around you; it will be no excuse before God to talk about your neighbors—sin is sin whether you live in it in company or alone. Be sure that it will not diminish your misery in hell, to find that all your neighbors are there as well as yourself. Oh, beloved, beware of this delusion; not a few allow such thoughts to dwell within them, who never express them with their lips, and even in the presence of God they flatter themselves they are acceptable to Him, because they are free from open and gross vices, and perform certain known duties. All such are Pharisees; they use the Pharisee's prayer, and they will meet with the Pharisee's reception at the hand of God.

Hearken now to the TAX COLLECTOR. "He smote upon his bosom, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner." He does not say "Be merciful to all sinners," thus leaving it doubtful whether he means himself or not—but "Be merciful to *me,"* a sinner in whom there is no health, in whom there is no good thing—a sinner in thought, word and deed; and he gives the ground of his hope too, not like some among you, who hope to be forgiven without exactly knowing how or why. The words translated "be merciful," go further. They mean, "offer an atonement for me, be reconciled unto me, through the sacrifice You have appointed." Do you think he would have been offended, as some are now, if he had been called a child of the devil, utterly corrupt, full of iniquity and worthy of nothing but wrath? Far from it: he knew he was a sinner, he felt his lost condition, he made no excuses, he offered no justification, he did not talk about his temptations, he did not make great professions of amendment, as if that could make up for the past; he presented himself at the throne of grace, as he was, weary and heavy laden, casting himself on the mercy of God with all his iniquities, and pleading the blood of the atonement. "God be merciful to me a sinner." Blessed indeed are all among you who have done likewise!

IV. Lastly, it remains to consider briefly ***the*** **RECEPTION the worshipers respectively met with.** "I tell you," says Jesus, "this man went down to his house justified rather than the other." The tax collector came poor in spirit, and he was justified. The Pharisee, rich in merits and self-esteem, went empty away. The penitent was not only pardoned—but justified. He had left his house heavy and afflicted by a sense of sin, he returned with joy and peace; he had asked mercy and received it, he had sought grace and found it; he

had come hungering and thirsting after righteousness and he was justified. "He went down to his house justified." But the proud Pharisee, not feeling his own needs, not acquainted with his own sinfulness, had sought no mercy, and had found none, and he departed unblessed and unheard; and from the saying the "tax collector went down to his house justified rather than the other," we may fairly suppose this man of self-righteousness and self-dependence had none of that sense of favor and acceptance which the repenting sinner enjoyed.

See now the general **APPLICATION** which our Lord makes: "Everyone who exalts himself shall be abased—but he who abases himself shall be exalted." Mark these words, "everyone who exalts himself." High or low, rich or poor, young or old, it matters not; for God is no respecter of people, "everyone who exalts himself" and not free grace; who trusts either in whole or in part in his own righteousness and performance and not entirely in Jesus Christ—though he go to church twice a day, though he keep the letter of the Ten Commandments, though he pays everything he owes, though he is sober and moral and decently behaved—everyone who exalts himself shall be abased and condemned, when Jesus Christ shall come to judge.

But on the other hand remember, "he who humbles himself "as a sinner before God and comes unto Christ, though he may have been the most wicked of transgressors, though he may have broken all the commandments, though he may have been a Sabbath-breaker, a drunkard, a thief, an adulterer, an extortioner—whatever his sin may have been, if he acts as the tax collector did, "he shall be exalted." That is—he shall be pardoned, and washed and sanctified and justified for the sake of Jesus Christ, and shall have his place with David and Manasseh and Mary Magdalen and the thief upon the cross—in the everlasting kingdom of our God and of the Lamb.

And now, beloved, in **CONCLUSION** let me urge upon all the lesson conveyed in this parable. It is a picture of a very large portion of professing Christians. Some, to be sure, are called by that name—but they never think at all about Christ or their own souls—it would make no difference to them if all the Bibles in the world were burned today—and of course they are going straight to destruction.

But all others, rich or poor (there is no distinction), are either Pharisees or tax collectors. There is no half-way house: they either trust to themselves wholly—or in part, which is much the same. Or else they are always self-condemned and have no confidence in anything they can do for justification.

You cannot search your heart too diligently, for this self-righteousness is the subtlest enemy of all. Beware of thinking, as the devil would have you, that the parable is a very good one for everybody else—but does not exactly touch your case. Be sure in this way you will lose your own souls. The English Prayer-book, which you use, and using it call yourselves "miserable sinners" every Sunday of your lives. Do you really feel this? Know for a certainty, if you never groan under the burden of sin and never make the tax collector's prayer your own, you cannot be saved. And if you feel this minute any doubt about your salvation, it were far better to give your soul the benefit of it, and re-lay the foundation of your faith.

But let none forget the point of the parable: the Pharisee was not rejected because he was a moral man—but because he was proud and self-righteous; the tax collector was not accepted because he was a sinner—but because he was eminently penitent. True repentance is necessary for all, whatever be their lives and outward conduct. It is not your morality and your virtues, O you Pharisees, which hinder your salvation—but that proud feeling of something worthy in yourselves, which prevents you from clinging simply and entirely to the cross and blood of Jesus Christ.

Carry home, then, I entreat you, all of you, that as there is no **way** to salvation but Jesus Christ; so there is no **character** for entering that way but that of the tax collector; and no **prayer** so acceptable in the sight of your Redeemer and your judge as "God be merciful to me a sinner!"

"READY TO BE OFFERED"

By J. C. Ryle

"For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all those who love his appearing." (2 Timothy 4:6-8)

In these words you see the apostle Paul looking three ways—*downwards, backwards, forward.* Downwards to the grave, backwards to his own ministry, forward to that great day, the day of judgment. Let us stand by his side a few minutes, and mark the words he uses. Happy is that soul among us who can look where Paul looked, and then speak as Paul spoke.

1. He looks downwards to the grave, and he does it *without fear*. Hear what he says. "I am ready to be offered." I am like an animal brought to the place of sacrifice, and bound with cords to the horns of the altar. The wine and oil have been poured on my head. The last ceremonies have been gone through. Every preparation has been made. It only remains to receive the death-blow, and then all is over.

"The time of my departure is at hand." I am like a ship about to unmoor and put to sea. All on board is ready. I only wait to have the moorings cast off which fasten me to the shore, and I shall begin my voyage.

Brethren, these are glorious words to come from the lips of a child of Adam like ourselves. Death is a solemn thing, and never so much so as when we draw near to it ourselves. The grave is a chilling, heart-sickening idea, and it is vain to pretend it is not; yet here is a mortal man, who can look calmly into the narrow house appointed for all living, and say, while he stands upon the brink, "I see it all, and am not afraid."

2. Let us listen to him again. **He looks backwards, to his ministerial life**, and he does it without shame. Hear what he says. "I

have fought a good fight." There he speaks as a **soldier**. I have fought that good battle with the world, the flesh, and the devil, from which so many shrink and draw back.

"I have finished my course." There he speaks as one who has **run** for a prize. I have run the race marked out for me. I have gone over the ground staked out for me, however rough and steep. I have not turned aside because of difficulties, and have at length reached the goal.

"I have kept the faith." There he speaks as a **steward**. I have held fast that glorious gospel which was committed to my trust. I have not mingled it with man's traditions, nor spoiled its simplicity by adding my own notions, nor allowed others to adulterate it without withstanding them to the face. As a soldier, a runner, a steward, he seems to say, I am not ashamed.

Brethren, that Christian is happy who, as he leaves this world, can leave such testimony behind him. A good conscience will save no man, wash away no sin, lift us not one inch towards heaven. Yet a good conscience will be found a pleasant visitor at our bedsides in a dying hour. Do you remember that place in Pilgrim's Progress, which describes old Honest's passage over the river of death? "The river," says Bunyan, "at that time overflowed its banks in some places—but Mr. Honest in his lifetime had spoken to one, Good Conscience, to meet him there, the which he also did, and lent him his hand, and so helped him over." Believe me, there is a mine of truth in that passage.

3. Let us hear the apostle once more. **He looks forward to the great day of reckoning**, and he does it without doubt. Mark his words: "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only—but unto all those who love His appearing." A glorious reward, he seems to say, is ready and laid up in store for me, even that crown which is only given to the righteous. In the great day of judgment the Lord shall give this crown to me, and to all besides me who have loved Him as an unseen Savior, and longed to see Him face to face. My work is over. This one thing now remains for me to look forward to, and nothing more.

You see, brethren, he speaks without any hesitation or distrust. He regards the crown as a sure thing, as his own already. He declares his belief that the righteous Judge will give it to him, with an unfaltering confidence. Paul was no stranger to all the circumstances and accompaniments of that great day to which he referred. The great white throne, the assembled world, the opened books, the revealing of all secrets, the listening angels, the solemn sentence, the eternal separation, all these were things with which he was well acquainted. But none of these things moved him. His faith overleaped them all, and only saw Christ, his all-prevailing Advocate, and the blood of sprinkling, and sin washed away. "A crown," says he, "is laid up for me. The Lord Himself SHALL give it to me." He speaks as if he saw it all with his own eyes.

Such are the main things which these verses contain. Of most of them I cannot pretend to speak. I shall therefore only try to set before you one point in the passage, and that is the "assured hope" with which the apostle looks forward to his own prospects in the day of judgment. I shall do this the more readily because of the great importance which, I feel, attaches to the subject, and the great neglect with which, I humbly conceive, it is often treated in this day. But I shall do it at the same time with fear and trembling. I feel that I am treading on very delicate ground, and that it is easy to speak rashly and unscripturally in this matter. The road between truth and error is here especially a narrow pass, and if I shall be enabled to do good to some, without doing harm to others, I shall be very thankful.

Now, there are just four things which I wish to bring before you, and it may perhaps clear our way if I name them to you at once:

I. First, then, I will try to show you that an assured hope, such as Paul here expresses, is a true and Scriptural thing.

II. Secondly, I will make this broad concession, that a man may never arrive at this assured hope, and yet be saved.

III. Thirdly, I will give you some reasons why an assured hope is exceedingly to be desired.

IV. Lastly, I will try to point out some causes why an assured hope is so seldom attained.

I. First, then, I said, **an assured hope is a true and Scriptural thing.**

Assurance, such as Paul here expresses, is not a mere imagine or feeling. It is not the result of high animal spirits or a lively temperament of body. It is a positive gift of the Holy Spirit, bestowed without reference to men's bodily frames or constitutions, and a gift which every believer in Christ should aim at, and seek after.

The word of God appears to me to teach, that a believer may arrive at an assured confidence with regard to his own salvation.

I lay it down deliberately that a true Christian or converted man may reach that comfortable degree of faith, that in general he shall feel confident as to the safety and forgiveness of his own soul, shall seldom be troubled with doubts, seldom be distracted with hesitations, seldom be distressed with anxious questionings, seldom be alarmed about his own state. He may have many an inward conflict with sin—but he shall look forward to death, like Paul, without trembling, and to judgment without dismay.

Such is my account of assurance. Mark it well. I say neither less nor more.

Now such a statement as this is often disputed and denied. Many cannot see it at all.

The Church of Rome denounces assurance in the most unmeasured tones. The Council of Trent declares roundly that "a believer's assurance of the pardon of his sin is a vain and ungodly confidence"; and Cardinal Bellarmine, their well-known champion, calls it a "prime error of heretics."

The great majority of the worldly among ourselves oppose the doctrine of assurance. It offends and annoys them. They do not like others to feel comfortable and sure, because they never feel so themselves. That *they* cannot receive it is certainly no marvel.

But there are also some true believers who reject assurance. They shrink from it as a notion fraught with danger. They consider it borders on presumption. They seem to think it a proper humility to live in a certain degree of doubt. This is to be regretted, and does

much harm.

I frankly allow there are some presumptuous fools who profess to feel a confidence for which they have no Scripture warrant. There always are some who think well of themselves when God thinks ill, just as there are some who think ill of their own case when God thinks well. There always will be such. There never yet was a Scriptural truth without abuses, impositions and counterfeits. Weeds will grow as well as wheat in rich ground. There will be fanatics as long as the world stands. But for all this, an assured hope is a real and true thing. My answer to all who deny the existence of real well-grounded assurance is simply this, "Look at Scripture." If assurance be not there I have not another word to say.

But does not Job say, "I KNOW that my Redeemer lives, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God "(Job 19:25, 26)

Does not David say, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff they comfort me "(Psalm 23:4)

Does not Isaiah say, "You will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You" (Isaiah 26:3) and again, "The work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever "(32:17)

Does not Paul say to the Romans, "The Spirit bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Romans 8:16) and to the Corinthians, "We *know* that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved we have a building of God "(2 Cor. 5:1) and to Timothy, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him" (2 Tim. 1:12) And does He not speak to the Colossians of the "full assurance of understanding" (Col. 2:2), and to the Hebrews of the "full assurance of faith and of hope" (Heb. 6:11, 10:22)

Does not Peter expressly say, "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure" (2 Peter 1:10)

Does not John say, "We know that we have passed from death unto life" (1 John 3:14) and "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God: that you may know that you have eternal life" (1 John 5:13), "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in wickedness" (1 John 5:19)

Brethren, I desire to speak with all humility on every controverted point. I feel that I am only a poor fallible child of Adam myself. But I must say that in the passages I have quoted I see something far higher than the mere "hopes," and "wishes," where so many appear content to stop. I see the language of persuasion, confidence, knowledge, nay, I might almost say of certainty—and I feel for my own part, if I may take the Scriptures in their plain obvious meaning, assurance is true.

But my answer furthermore to all who dislike the doctrine of assurance, as bordering on presumption, is this. It cannot be presumption to tread in the steps of Peter and Paul, of John and of Job. They were all eminently humble and lowly-minded men, if ever any were, and yet they all speak of their own state with an assured hope. Surely this should teach us that deep humility and strong assurance are by no means incompatible, and for this simple reason, if for no other, the charge of presumption falls to the ground.

My answer furthermore is, that many have attained to such an assured hope as our text expresses, even in modern days. Many have appeared to walk in almost uninterrupted fellowship with the Father and the Son, have seemed to enjoy an almost unceasing sense of the light of God's reconciled countenance shining down upon them, and have left on record their experience. I could mention well-known names in proof of this, if time permitted. The thing has been, and is, and that is enough.

My answer lastly is, it cannot be wrong to *feel* confident in a matter where God speaks unconditionally, to believe decidedly when God speaks decidedly, to have a sure persuasion of pardon and peace when one rests on the word and oath of Him that never changes. It is an utter mistake to suppose that the believer who feels assurance is resting on anything he sees in himself. He simply leans on the Scriptures of truth, and on the Mediator of the new covenant. He believes the Lord Jesus means what He says, and takes Him at His word. Assurance is, after all, no more than a full-grown faith; a masculine faith that grasps Christ's promise with both hands; a faith that argues like the good centurion—'If you only speak the word Lord, I shall be healed.'

Depend on it, Paul was the last man in the world to build his assured hope on anything of his own. He, who wrote himself down chief of sinners, had a deep sense of his own guilt and corruption—but then he had a still deeper sense of the length and breadth of Christ's righteousness. He had a clear view of the fountain of evil within him—but then he had a still clearer view of that other fountain which removes all uncleanness. He had a lively feeling of his own weakness—but he had a still livelier feeling that Christ's promise, "They shall never perish," would never be broken. He knew, if ever man did, that he was a poor frail bark traversing a stormy ocean. He saw, if any did, the rolling waves and roaring tempest by which he was surrounded—but then he looked away from self to Jesus, and so had hope. He remembered that anchor within the veil, sure and steadfast. He remembered the word and work and intercession of Him who loved him and gave Himself for him. And this it was that enabled him to say so boldly, "A crown is laid up for me; the Lord shall give it to me; the Lord will preserve me; I shall never be confounded."

II. I pass on to the second thing I spoke of. I said **a believer may never arrive at this assured hope, which Paul expresses, and yet be saved.**

I grant this most fully. I do not dispute it for a moment. I would not desire to make one contrite heart sad that God has not made sad —or to discourage one fainting child of God—or to leave the impression that you have no part or lot in Christ except you feel assurance. To have saving faith is one thing: to have an assured hope like the apostle Paul's is quite another. I think this ought never to be forgotten.

I know some great and good men have held a different view. But I desire to call no man master. For my own part, I should think any other view than that I have given, a most uncomfortable gospel to preach, and one very likely to keep men back a long time from the gate of life.

I shrink not from saying, that by grace a man may have sufficient faith to flee to Christ, really to lay hold on Him, really to trust in Him, really to be a child of God, really to be saved; and yet never, to his last day, be free from much anxiety, doubt, and fear.

"A letter," says old Watson, "may be written, which is not sealed; so grace may be written in the heart, yet the Spirit may not set the seal of assurance to it."

A child may be born heir to a great fortune, and yet never be aware of his riches—live childish, die childish, and never know the fullness of his possession. And so also a man may be a babe in Christ's family, think as a babe, speak as a babe, and though saved never enjoy a lively hope, never know the real privilege of his inheritance.

Do not therefore, my brethren, mistake my meaning. Do not do me the injustice to say I told you none were saved except such as could say, like Paul, "I know and I am persuaded, there is a crown laid up for me."

I do not say so. I tell you nothing of the kind. Faith in Christ a man must have. This is the one door. Without faith no man can be saved—that is certain. A man *must* feel his sins and lost estate, *must* come to Christ for salvation, *must* rest his hope on this alone. But if he has only faith to do this, however weak that faith may be, I will engage he will not miss heaven. Yes! though his faith be no bigger than a grain of mustard-seed, if it only brings him to Christ and enables him to touch the hem of His garment, he shall be saved, saved as surely as the oldest saint in Paradise, saved as completely and eternally as Peter or John or Paul. There are degrees in our sanctification. In justification there are none.

But all this time, I would have you take notice, the poor soul may have no assurance of his acceptance with God. He may have fear upon fear, and doubt upon doubt, many a question and many an anxiety, many a struggle and many a misgiving, clouds and darkness, storm and tempest to the very end.

I will engage, I repeat, that bare, simple faith in Christ shall save a man, though he never attain to assurance—but I will not engage it shall bring him to heaven with strong and abounding consolations. I will engage it shall land him safe in harbor—but I will not engage he does not reach the shore weather-beaten and tempest-tossed, scarcely knowing himself that he is safe.

Brethren, I believe it is of great importance to keep in view this distinction between faith and assurance. It explains things which an inquirer in religion sometimes finds it hard to understand. Faith, let us remember, is the root, and assurance is the flower. Doubtless you can never have the flower without the root—but it is no less certain you may have the root and never have the flower. Faith is that poor trembling woman, who came behind Jesus in the press, and touched the hem of His garment; assurance is Stephen standing calmly in the midst of his murderers, and saying, "I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God." Faith is the penitent thief crying, "Lord, remember me"; assurance is Job, sitting in the dust, covered with sores, and saying, "I know that my Redeemer lives." Faith is Peter's drowning cry, as he began to sink, "Lord, save me"; assurance is that same Peter declaring before the council, "There is no other name given under heaven whereby we can be saved; we cannot but speak the things we have seen and heard." Faith is the still small voice, "Lord, I believe, help my unbelief"; assurance is the confident challenge, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? who is he who condemns?" Faith is Saul praying in the house of Judas at Damascus, sorrowful, blind, and alone; assurance is Paul the aged prisoner looking calmly into the grave, and saying, "I know whom I have believed; there is a crown laid up for me."

Faith is life. How great the blessing! Who can tell the gulf between life and death? Yet life may be weak, sickly, unhealthy, painful, trying, anxious, worn, burdensome, joyless, smileless, to the last. Assurance is more than life. It is health, strength, power, vigor, activity, energy, manliness, beauty.

Brethren, it is not a question of saved or not saved—but of privilege or no privilege; it is not a question of peace or no peace—but of great peace or little peace; it is not a question between the wanderers of this world and the school of Christ, it is one that belongs only to the school, it is between the first class and the highest class. He who has faith does well. Happy would I feel, if I thought you all had it. Blessed, thrice blessed, are those who believe: they are safe; they are washed; they are justified; they are beyond the power of hell. But he who has assurance does far better, sees more, feels more, knows more, enjoys more, has more days like those spoken of in Deuteronomy, the *days of heaven upon earth*.

III. I pass on to the third thing of which I spoke. I will give you **some reasons why an assured hope is exceedingly to be desired.**

I ask your attention to this point especially. I heartily wish that assurance was more sought after than it is. Too many among us begin doubting and go on doubting, live doubting, die doubting, and go to heaven in a kind of mist. It would ill become me to speak slightingly of "hopes "and "wishes," but I fear many of us sit down content with them and go no further. I would like to see fewer "doubting babes" in the Lord's family, and more who could say "I know, and am persuaded." Oh! that you would all covet the best gifts, and not be content with less. You miss the full tide of blessedness the gospel was meant to convey. You keep yourselves in a low and starved condition of soul, while your Lord is saying, "Eat and drink, O beloved, that your joy may be full."

1. Know then, for one thing, that assurance is a thing to be desired, because of **the present joy and peace it affords**. Doubts and fears have great power to mar the comfort of a true believer. Uncertainty and suspense are bad enough in any condition—in the matter of our health, our property, our families, our affections, our earthly callings—but never so bad as in the affairs of our souls. Now so long as a believer cannot get beyond "I hope and I wish," he manifestly feels a certain degree of uncertainty about his spiritual state. The very words imply as much: he says "I hope" because he dare not say "I know."

Assurance, my brethren, goes far to set a child of God free from this painful kind of bondage, and mightily ministers to comfort. It gives him joy and peace in believing. It makes him patient in tribulation, contented in trial, calm in affliction, unmoved in sorrow, not afraid of evil tidings. It sweetens his bitter cups, it lessens the burden of his crosses, it smooths the rough places on which he travels, it lightens the valley of the shadow of death. It makes him feel as if he had something solid beneath his feet and something firm under his hand, a sure Friend by the way and a sure home in the end. He feels that the great business of life is a settled business—debt, disaster, work, and all other business is by comparison small. Assurance will help a man to bear poverty and loss, it will teach him to say, "I know that I have in heaven a better and more enduring substance. Silver and gold have I none—but grace and glory are mine

and can never be taken away." Assurance will support a man in sickness, make all his bed, smooth his pillow. It will enable him to say, "If my earthly house of this tabernacle fail, I have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. . . . I desire to depart and be with Christ. My flesh and my heart may fail—but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever."

He who has assured hope can sing in prison, like Paul and Silas at Philippi. Assurance can give songs in the night. He can sleep with the full prospect of execution on the next day, like Peter in Herod's dungeon. Assurance says, "I will lay me down and take my rest, for you, Lord, make me dwell in safety." He can rejoice to suffer shame for Christ's sake, as the apostles did. Assurance says, "Rejoice and be exceeding glad—there is a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." He can meet a violent and painful death without fear, as Stephen did in olden time, and Cranmer, Ridley, Latimer and Taylor in our own land. Assurance says, "Fear not those who kill the body, and after that have no more they can do. Lord Jesus, into Your hand I commend my spirit."

Ah, brethren, the comfort assurance can give in the hour of death is a great point, depend upon it, and never will you think it so great as when your turn comes to die. In that solemn hour there are few believers who do not find out the value and privilege of assurance, whatever they may have thought about it in their lives; general hopes and trusts are all very well to live upon—but when you come to die you will want to be able to say, "I *know* and I *feel*." Believe me, Jordan is a cold stream to cross alone. The last enemy, even death, is a strong foe. When our souls are in departing, there is no cordial like the strong wine of assurance.

There is a beautiful expression in the Prayer-book's Visitation of the Sick. "The Almighty Lord, who is a most strong tower to all those who put their trust in Him, be now and evermore your defense, and make you *know* and *feel* that there is no other name under heaven through whom you may receive health and salvation—but only the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." The compilers showed great wisdom there: they saw that when the eyes grow dim and the heart grows faint, there must be *knowing* and *feeling* what Christ has done for us if there is to be perfect peace.

2. Let me name another thing. Assurance is to be desired, because **it tends to make a Christian an active, useful Christian**. None, generally speaking, do so much for Christ on earth as those who enjoy the fullest confidence of a free entrance into heaven. That sounds wonderful, I daresay—but it is true.

A believer who lacks an assured hope will spend much of his time in inward searchings of heart about his own state. He will be full of his own doubtings and questionings, his own conflicts and corruptions. In short, you will often find that he is so taken up with this internal warfare that he has little leisure for other things, little time to work for God.

Now a believer who has, like Paul, an assured hope is free from these harassing distractions. He does not vex his soul with doubts about his own pardon and acceptance. He looks at the covenant sealed with blood, at the finished work and never-broken word of his Lord and Savior, and therefore counts his salvation a *settled thing*. And thus he is able to give an undivided attention to the Lord's work, and so in the long run to do more.

Take, for an illustration of this, two English emigrants, and suppose them set down side by side in Australia or New Zealand. Give each of them a piece of land to clear and cultivate. Secure that land to them by every needful legal instrument, let it be conveyed as freehold to them and theirs forever, let the conveyance be publicly registered, and the property made sure to them by every deed and security that man's ingenuity can devise. Suppose, then, that one of them shall set to work to bring his land into cultivation, and labor at it day after day without intermission or cessation. Suppose, in the meanwhile, that the other shall be continually leaving his work, and repeatedly going to the public registry to ask whether the land really is his own—whether there is not some mistake—whether after all there is not some flaw in the legal instruments which conveyed it to him. The one shall never doubt his title—but just diligently work on; the other shall never feel sure of his title, and spend half his time in going to Sydney or Auckland with needless inquiries about it. Which, now, of these two men will have made most progress in a year's time? Who will have done the most for his land, got the greatest breadth under tillage, have the best crops to show? You all know as well as I do—I need not supply an answer. There can only be one reply.

Brethren, so will it be in the matter of our title to "mansions in the skies." None will do so much for the Lord who bought them as the believer who sees that title clear. The joy of the Lord will be that man's strength. "Restore unto me," says David, "the joy of Your salvation . . . then will I teach transgressors Your ways." Never were there such working Christians as the apostles. They seemed to live to labor: Christ's work was their food and drink. They counted not their lives dear; they spent and were spent; they laid down health, ease, worldly comfort at the foot of the cross. And one cause of this, I believe, was their assured hope. They were men who said, "We know that we are of God."

3. Let me name another thing. Assurance is to be desired, because **it tends to make a Christian a decided Christian**. Indecision and doubt about our own state in God's sight is a grievous disease, and the mother of many evils. It often produces a wavering and an unstable walk in following the Lord. Assurance helps to cut many a knot, and to make the path of Christian duty clear and plain. Many, of whom we feel a hope that they are God's children, and have grace, however weak, are continually perplexed with doubts on points of practice. "Should we do such and such a thing? Shall we give up this family custom? Ought we to go to that place? How shall we draw the line about visiting? What is to be the measure of our dressing and entertainments? Are we never to dance, never to play at cards, never to attend pleasure parties?" These are questions which seem to give them constant trouble. And often, very often, the simple root of this perplexity is that they do not feel assured that they themselves are children of God. They have not yet settled the point which side of the gate they are on. They do not know whether they are inside the ark or not.

That a child of God ought to act in a certain decided way they quite feel—but the grand question is, "Are they children of God themselves?" If they only felt they were so, they would go straightforward and take a decided line—but not feeling sure about it, their conscience is forever coming to a dead-lock. The devil whispers, "Perhaps, after all, you are only a hypocrite; what right have you to take a decided course? wait until you are really a Christian." And this whisper too often just turns the scale, and leads on to some wretched conformity to the world.

Brethren, I verily believe you have here one reason why so many are inconsistent, unsatisfactory, and half-hearted in their conduct about the world. They feel no assurance that they are Christ's, and so they feel a hesitancy about breaking with the world. They shrink from laying aside all the ways of the old man, because they are not confident they have put on the new. Depend upon it, one secret of

halting between two opinions is want of assurance.

4. Let me name one thing more. Assurance is to be desired because **it tends to make the holiest Christians.**

This, too, sounds wonderful and amazing—and yet it is true. It is one of the paradoxes of the Gospel, contrary, at first sight, to reason and common-sense, and yet it is a fact. Bellarmine was seldom more wide of the truth than when he said, "Assurance tends to carelessness and sloth." He who is freely forgiven by Christ will always do much for Christ's glory, and he who has the fullest assurance of this forgiveness will ordinarily keep up the closest walk with God. It is a faithful saying in the first Epistle of John, "Every man who has this hope in him purifies himself, even as He is pure."

None are so likely to maintain a watchful guard over their heart and life, as those who know the comfort of living in near communion with God. They feel their privilege, and will fear losing it. They will dread falling from their high estate and marring their own comforts by inconsistencies. He who goes a journey and has little money to lose, takes little thought of danger, and cares not how late he travels in a dangerous country. He who carries gold and jewels, on the contrary, will be a cautious traveler: he will look well to his road, his house, and his company, and run no risks. The man that most fully enjoys the light of God's reconciled countenance will be a man tremblingly afraid of losing its blessed comfort, and jealously fearful of doing anything to grieve the Holy Spirit.

Beloved brethren, would you have great peace? Would you like to feel the everlasting arms around you, and to hear the voice of Jesus drawing near to your soul, and saying, "I am your salvation"? Would you be useful in your day and generation? Would you be known of all as bold, firm, decided, single-eyed followers of Christ? Would you be eminently spiritually-minded and holy? "Ah!" you will some of you say, "these are the very things we desire: we long for them, we pant after them—but they seem far from us."

Then take my advice this day. Seek an assured hope, like Paul's. Seek to obtain a simple, childlike confidence in God's promises. Seek to be able to say with the apostle, "I know whom I have believed; I am persuaded that He is mine and I am His."

You have many of you tried the ways and methods, and completely failed. Change your plan. Go upon another tack. Begin with assurance. Lay aside your doubts. Cast aside your faithless backwardness to take the Lord at His word. Come and roll yourself, your soul and your sins upon your gracious Savior. Begin with simple believing, and all other things shall soon be added to you.

IV. I come to the last thing of which I spoke. I promised to point out **some probable causes why an assured hope is so seldom attained**.

This, brethren, is a very serious question, and ought to raise in us all great searchings of heart. Few certainly of all the sheep of Christ ever seem to reach this blessed spirit of assurance. Many, comparatively, believe—but few are persuaded. Many, comparatively, have saving faith—but few that glorious confidence which shines forth in our text.

Now, why is this so? Why is a thing which Peter enjoins as a positive duty a thing of which few believers have an experimental knowledge? Why is an assured hope so rare?

I desire to offer a few suggestions on this point with all humility. I know that many have never attained assurance, at whose feet I would gladly sit both in earth and heaven. *Perhaps* the Lord sees something in some men's natural temperament which makes assurance not good for them. Perhaps to be kept in spiritual health they need to be kept very low. God only knows. Still, after every allowance, I fear there are many believers without an assured hope, whose case may too often be explained by causes such as these.

1. One common cause, I suspect, is **a defective view of the doctrine of justification**. I am inclined to think that justification and sanctification are in many minds insensibly confused together. They receive the gospel truth that there must be something done *in us*, as well as something done *for us*, if we are true believers; and so far they are right. But then, without being aware of it perhaps, they seem to imbibe the erroneous idea, that this justification is in some degree affected by something within themselves. They do not clearly see that Christ's work and not their own work, either in whole or in part, either directly or indirectly, alone is the ground of our acceptance with God; that justification is a thing entirely outside of us, and nothing is needful on our part but simple faith, and that the weakest believer is as fully justified as the strongest. They appear to forget sometimes that we are saved and justified as sinners, and only as sinners, and that we never can attain to anything higher, if we live to the age of Methuselah. Redeemed sinners, justified sinners, and renewed sinners doubtless we must be—but sinners, sinners always to the very last. They seem, too, to expect that a believer may some time in his life be in a measure free from corruption, and attain to a kind of inward perfection. And not finding this angelical state of things in their own hearts, they at once conclude there must be something wrong, go mourning all their days, and are oppressed with fears that they have no part or lot in Christ.

My dear brethren, if you or any believing soul here desires assurance and has not got it, go and ask yourself first of all if you are sound in the faith, if you are thoroughly girt about with truth, and your eyes thoroughly clear in the matter of justification.

2. Another common cause, I am afraid, is **slothfulness about growth in grace**. I suspect many believers hold dangerous and unscriptural views on this point. Many appear to me to think that, once converted, they have little more to attend to—that a state of salvation is a kind of easy-chair, in which they may just sit still, lie back, and be happy. They seem to imagine that grace is given to them, that they may enjoy it, and they forget that it is given to be used and employed, like a talent. Such people lose sight of the many direct injunctions to increase, to grow, to abound more and more, to add to our faith and the like; and in this do-little condition of mind, I never marvel that they miss assurance.

Brethren, you must always remember **there is an inseparable connection between assurance and diligence**. "Give diligence," says Peter, "to make your calling and election sure." "I desire," says Paul, "that everyone of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end." "It is the diligent soul," says the Proverb, "that shall be made fat." There is much truth in the maxim of the Puritans, "Saving faith comes by hearing—but faith of assurance comes not without doing."

3. Another common cause is **an inconsistent walk in life**. With grief and sorrow I feel constrained to say, I fear nothing in this day more frequently prevents men attaining an assured hope than this. Inconsistency of life is utterly destructive of great peace of heart. The two things are incompatible. They cannot go together. If you must keep your besetting sins, and cannot make up your minds to

give them up, if you shrink from cutting off the right hand and plucking out the right eye when required, I will engage you shall have no assurance. A vacillating walk, a backwardness to take a bold and decided line, a readiness to conform to the world, a hesitating witness for Christ, a lingering tone of profession—all these make up a sure recipe for bringing a blight upon the garden of your soul. It is vain to suppose you will feel assured and persuaded of your pardon and peace, unless you count all God's commandments concerning all things to be right, and hate every sin whether great or small. One Achan allowed in the camp of your heart, will poison all your springs of comfort.

I bless God our salvation in no sense depends on our own works. "By grace are we saved;" not by works of righteousness that we have done, through faith, without the deed of the law. But I never would have any believer for a moment forget that our sense of salvation depends much on the manner of our living. Inconsistency will dim your eyes and bring clouds between you and the sun. The sun is the same—but you will not be able to see its brightness and enjoy its warmth. It is in the path of well-doing that assurance will come down and meet you. "The secret of the Lord," says David, "is with those who fear Him." "Great peace have those who love your law: and nothing shall cause them to stumble." "To him that orders his conversation aright will I show the salvation of God." Paul was a man who exercised himself to have a conscience void of offence toward God and toward man; he could say boldly, "I have fought a good fight, ... I have kept the faith." I do not wonder that the Lord enabled him to add confidently, "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day."

Brethren, I commend the three points I have just named to your own private consideration. I am sure they are worth thinking over, and I advise every believer present who lacks assurance to do it. And may the Lord give him understanding in this and all things.

And now, brethren, in closing this sermon, let me speak first to those among you who have not yet believed, have not yet come out from the world, chosen the good part and followed Christ. See, then, my dear friends, from this subject the real privilege of a true Christian. Do not judge the Lord Jesus Christ by His people. Do not judge the comforts of His kingdom by the measure to which many of His subjects attain. Alas! we are many of us poor creatures. We come short, very short of the blessedness we might enjoy. But depend upon it there are glorious things in the city of our God, which they who have an assured hope taste even in their lifetime. There is bread enough and to spare in our Father's house, though many of us, alas! eat but little of it, and continue weak.

And why should not you enter in and share our privileges? Why should not you come with us and sit down by our side? What can the world give you, after all, which will bear comparison with the hope of the least member of the family of Christ? Truly the weakest child of God has got more durable riches in his hand, than the wealthiest man of the world that ever breathed. Oh! but I feel deeply for you in these days, if ever I did. I feel deeply for those whose treasure is all on earth and whose hopes are this side the grave. Yes! when I see old kingdoms and dynasties shaking to the very foundations; when I see property dependent on public confidence melting like snow in spring, when I see stocks and shares and funds losing their value, I do feel deeply for those who have no better portion, no place in a kingdom that cannot be removed.

Take the advice of a minister of Christ. Seek a treasure that cannot be taken from you; seek a city which has lasting foundations. Do as the apostle Paul did. Give yourself to Christ, and seek an incorruptible crown that fades not away. Come to the Lord Jesus Christ as lowly sinners, and He will receive you, pardon you, give you His renewing Spirit, fill you with peace. This shall give you more real comfort than this world has ever done. There is a gulf in your heart which nothing but Christ can fill.

Lastly, let me turn to all believers here present and speak to them a few words of brotherly counsel. For one thing, resolve this day to seek after an assured hope, if you do not feel you have got it. Believe, me, believe me, it is worth the seeking. If it is good to be sure in earthly things, how much better is it to be sure in heavenly things! Seek to know that you have a title, good and solid and not to be overthrown. Your salvation is a fixed and certain thing. God knows it. Why should not you seek to know it too? Paul never saw the book of life; and yet Paul says "I know and am persuaded." Go home and pray for an increase of faith. Cultivate that blessed root more, and then by God's blessing you shall have the flower.

For another thing, be not surprised if you do not attain assurance all at once. It is good sometimes to be kept waiting. We do not value things which we get without trouble. Joseph waited long for deliverance from prison—but it came at length. For another thing, be not surprised at occasional doubts after you have got assurance. No morning sun lasts all the day. There is a devil, and a strong devil too, and he will take care you know it. You must not forget you are on earth and not in heaven. Some doubt there always will be. He who never doubts has nothing to lose. He who never fears possesses nothing truly valuable. He who is never jealous knows little of deep love.

And finally do not forget that assurance is a thing that may be lost. Oh! it is a most delicate plant. It needs daily, hourly watching, watering, tending, cherishing. So take care. David lost it. Peter lost it. Each found it again—but not until after bitter tears. Quench not the Spirit; grieve Him not; vex Him not. Drive Him not to a distance by tampering with small bad habits and little sins. Little jarrings make unhappy homes, and petty inconsistencies will bring in a distance between you and the Spirit.

Hear the conclusion of the whole matter. The nearest walker with God will generally be kept in the greatest peace. The believer who follows the Lord most fully will ordinarily enjoy the most assured hope!

The Grace of God in Vain

by J. C. Ryle

"We then, as workers together with him, beseech you that you receive not the grace of God in vain." 2 Cor. 6:1.

Although the Church of Corinth, to which these words were written, was certainly not a body without spot and blemish; although we learn by Paul's first Epistle that in many things its members were to be blamed; still, with all its faults, it is plain this Church was very

different from the churches of our own day; there was less profession without practice, more fruit in proportion to the branches, a stronger growth of faith and holiness and love, a more abundant crop of wheat in proportion to the tares. And yet you see by the text how solemnly the apostle warns them of danger, how earnestly he entreats them not to hear the gospel only to their condemnation. He would not have them rest upon their outward privileges and opportunities, he would not have them soothe their consciences with the idea that all was safe because they were baptized in the name of Jesus—but as a faithful laborer in God's vineyard he calls on them to examine themselves, and beware lest they receive the grace of God in vain.

And are we better than they? Can we produce a greater list of evidences that God is truly in us? I speak as unto wise men, judge what I say. Verily, beloved, we are guilty in this matter. Let us rather confess that we have nothing whereof to glory, and as a shortcoming generation let us humbly consider what this text contains for our particular instruction. It is an easy matter to say, "one minister is too sharp, we do not like him, and another is too high, we cannot understand him, and another makes the way so narrow that no one can be saved, and another is so dull that we do not care to hear him." But consider, O you men and women who are so difficult to please, consider, O you who are so backward to search the Scriptures for yourselves—you have a great work to do, the time is short, the fashion of this world passes away, and tremble lest you go on doubting and trifling and fault-finding until the end—and so be found among that wretched company who have received the grace of God in vain.

Now, there are three points to be considered in our text.

I. What you are to understand by the grace of God.

II. What it is to receive it in vain.

III. The reasons why we beseech you so earnestly not to receive it in vain.

I. First, then, what is this grace of God, which the apostle here speaks of? It is an expression which has different meanings in Scripture. Sometimes it signifies the free favor of God, as when we read, "By grace are you saved, not of works." Sometimes it means the operation of the Holy Spirit in a man's conversion, as when Paul tells the Galatians, it was "God who called me by His grace." But in our text I conceive it has a wider, broader signification. I take it to mean that gracious offer of free salvation for the worst of sinners which is commonly called the gospel, and so called because it is in every way good tidings, that free gift of righteousness, peace and pardon, which is provided for all who will believe in the Lord Jesus.

Now, what is it that makes this offer so important and so precious? It is simply this, that we are all by nature sinful and corrupt. We are born into the world with a disposition inclined to evil and not to good. We show it in our inimagine by angry tempers, by jealousy, by selfishness. We show it in our youth by deceit, by idleness, by unwillingness to learn, by disobedience to parents, by unthankfulness, by self-conceit. And when we come to manhood, we show it in a hundred fashions—by giving way to our lusts and passions whenever we dare, by loving pleasure more than God, by Sabbath-breaking, and swearing, and drinking and fornication, by uncharitable conduct to our neighbors, by pride and vanity, by neglecting God's Bible, by staying away from His church, by despising His sacraments, by dishonoring His ministers, by worldly-mindedness, by living on from year to year without a spark of love to Him who gave us life and breath and all things that we enjoy. This is the manner in which we naturally like to pass our time; and thus it is that one way or another we prove our hearts to be "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked."

No doubt it was not so in the beginning: man was created upright, and his Maker pronounced him, like His other works, to be very good in the day when everything was finished—but Adam did not keep his first estate, he ate the forbidden fruit and fell; and in that hour there came a solemn change over his nature: he lost the holy image and likeness of God, and from that time the imagination of man has had a continual bent towards evil. And yet the God with whom we have to do is holy: He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, the least speck of sin is an abomination in His sight; the heaven that He dwells in is a holy place, and the judgment which he has appointed as the end of all things will be a judgment of holiness and a judgment of righteousness. And how can we expect to face this fiery trial? How can we come into our Maker's presence? The laws we have insulted, and the mercies we have lightly esteemed, would all rise up against us; by nature we are all shut up unto condemnation, there remains nothing for us to look forward to—but the worm that never dies and the fire that shall not be quenched.

But here, in this deplorable case, the grace of God has come in: the Lord of all, out of pure love and mercy, for we deserve nothing but wrath and condemnation—out of pure love and mercy, for He was not obliged to redeem us—the Lord of all has sent His beloved Son Jesus Christ to take our nature upon Him, and suffer death upon the cross, "that whoever believes in Him should not perish—but have everlasting life." It is the grace of God that, when we were all without hope, Christ came into the world, to do the things we never could have done, to fulfill that holy and just and good law which brings us all in guilty, and He did fulfill it to the last jot and tittle; to suffer the punishment which we deserved, and He did suffer it upon the cross, and drank the bitter cup to the very dregs. By the things He did and the things He suffered—He provided a perfect righteousness for everyone who is willing to believe.

It is the grace of God that He came to do His Father's will, and to satisfy His Father's justice, by standing in our place and taking upon Himself the sins of the whole world; and though the burden was so heavy that He sweat great drops of blood, yet He proved "mighty to save," and won a victory over our great enemies upon the cross. Here is the grace of God, of which the apostle spoke; here is the message we are charged to deliver. We offer to you Christ and a free pardon, Christ and everlasting life. You may have been fornicators and adulterers, and thieves and covetous and drunkards, and revilers and extortioners, and yet you are not shut out from this salvation; only believe—all things are possible to him that believes.

You tell me you have been a vile sinner before God. I answer the blood of Christ cleanses from all sin. You tell me you have broken God's laws a million times. I answer Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. You tell me you have no righteousness, you will never be fit for heaven—I offer you the perfect righteousness of the Lord Jesus Himself, all that He has done shall be accounted yours. I repeat, the complete righteousness of the Lord Jesus shall be placed upon you as a pure white garment, which shall cover all your iniquities, and who shall dare to raise his voice against you? But you tell me you have such a cold, dead, wicked heart. I answer, if you come at once unto the Lord Jesus He shall pour the Holy Spirit upon you and give you a new one, and you shall become a new creature.

This very day I set before the worst among you—pardon and peace and immortality, without money and without price. I do not tell

you to go and become saints, to go and live a new life before you can receive these blessings. I call upon to return at once, with all your sins upon you, and lay them at your Savior's feet, and they shall be forgiven. I know nothing of conditions; I am not sent to one and not to another. I am commissioned to invite you all to my Master's banquet, and whatever your character may have been in time past. However thoughtless and profane you may have been, I am charged to offer you the gospel of the grace of God, to tell you that all shall be pardoned and forgotten—if you trust in Jesus' name. Here is bread for the hungry and water for the thirsty—healing balm for the wounded and rest for the weary—light for those that are in darkness and life for those that are dead—riches for those that are poor, and joy for those that mourn; Christ's precious blood shall wash away every single sin, Christ's everlasting righteousness shall be all your own.

Return unto Jesus—all you that are far off, old or young, high or low, rich or poor—whether you be now sleeping in utter carelessness, whether you be godless blasphemers of the truth, whether you be talking, self-deceiving hypocrites, whether you be self-righteous, formal Pharisees, whether you be cold, heartless listeners to truth, whether you be wretched backsliders from the narrow way—return unto Jesus, I beseech you, for He has redeemed you.

What true happiness do you now have, in the life you now live? You are not really happy; you tremble at the thought of judgment. Return unto Jesus and you shall be welcome; all things shall be yours, the world or life or death—or things present or things to come, all shall be yours, for you shall be Christ's and Christ is God's. Come to your Father's house; the price of your redemption has been paid, and He prays you to enter in; He tells the very guiltiest of you all that if you will only come to Him through the appointed Mediator, He will blot out as with a thick cloud your transgressions—and as if carried into a land that is not inhabited, He will make mention of them no more.

Such, then, beloved, is the mighty doctrine which Paul had in view when he spoke of "the grace of God" in our text. He did not merely mean that spiritual help is promised to those who want to set up a righteousness of their own; he had before his mind that grand offer of full reconciliation which is made by our Heavenly Father to His rebellious children through Christ's atonement; he meant that new and living way which Jesus has opened for disobedient man to draw near his holy Maker; that mystery of undeserved love and mercy which angels desire to look into. So deeply does he dread the corruption of man's heart, that he seems to tremble lest the Corinthians should hear of this grace of God and go no further, should listen to the report of the gospel and yet perish in their sins.

II. Let us, then, next inquire **how and when it may be said that a man receives the grace of God in vain.** Now, I have nothing to do in this matter with the open unbeliever, the man who deliberately forsakes the house of God, and turns his back upon the simplest elements, the first principles of Scriptural religion. Of such a one I can only say that he is not receiving the grace of God at all; he will not even listen to our message; he has not even an outward form of Christianity, and to all intents and purposes he is living without God in the world. The people whom I wish to deal with are those who profess and call themselves Christians, the men and women who generally make up our congregations. You must know well that a vast proportion of them hear the gospel—and yet are never the better for it; they receive the grace of God into their ears and their mouths and their heads, yes, sometimes even into their houses, and yet they do not receive it into their own hearts, and therefore they are said to receive it in vain, unprofitably, to no purpose.

And the point I want to establish in your minds at present is how and why and when these things are so. And be you very sure there never was a time when such inquiry was so necessary: you live in days which prophets and kings of old did wish to see and never saw, days when many run to and fro, and light and knowledge is marvelously increased, days when there are opportunities for getting spiritual wisdom which your grandfathers never enjoyed—but days, alas! when there is much profession without practice, and there is need for much self-examination, lest perchance we deceive ourselves.

Now, I say that all are receiving the grace of God in vain who have never been convinced of the guilt and corruption of their own hearts, who have never found out that they are sinners and must be born again of the Holy Spirit, who are altogether at ease about their own souls, and cannot see the need for such anxiety as Christ's people show, and wonder at people who think much about religion; who cannot believe themselves to be so desperately wicked, and cannot think that God will be so particular. These are the men who in their own opinion are rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing, and to this hour know not that they are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked; all such have hitherto received the grace of God in vain.

I say in vain, for how can a man know the value of a remedy until he has felt his disease? how can you love the light if you never discovered yourself to be in darkness? how can you see the excellence of the gospel if you never found yourself condemned by the law? how can you understand your need of a Savior if you never groaned under the burden of sin? Oh no! beloved, if your spirit has never witnessed within you that you have really erred and strayed from God's ways like a lost sheep, that you have really followed too much the devices and desires of your own hearts, that you have really offended against God's holy laws, that there really is no health in you—if you have never mourned over your transgressions with a true godly sorrow, and hated them with a true godly hatred—if you are hitherto a stranger to these feelings, it is impossible you can regard Christ crucified as the one thing needful; you may have heard of the grace of God—but you know nothing of it as you ought to know.

But again, there are many who are convinced of sin, and yet will not come to Christ and the hope set before them in the gospel. Some are so melted under the word that rivers of tears run down their eyes, they cannot speak bad enough of their past lives, they will have nothing more to do with the accursed thing. And yet the first temptation carries all before it, and their goodness proves no better than the morning dew and the cloud which passes away—and all because they made resolutions in their own strength, they did not build upon the sure corner-stone, even the Lord Jesus Christ, without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy.

Others, perhaps, appear to make surer work: they put away the evil of their doings; they give up outward vices, they put on a whitewashed garment, and are beautiful in the eyes of men, and they are regular and decent in the formal duties of religion—but there they stop. They flatter themselves that all is safe; that they have whereof to boast before God; and that people so sober, so honest, so just, so reformed, cannot miss of attaining everlasting life. But if the word of God be true, their hopes are false; they are looking to themselves while Scripture says, "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh living be justified"; they are building on the sand.

"I am the way, the truth, and the life," says Jesus; "no man comes unto the Father but by me." A simple faith in the blood of Christ is the very alphabet in the school of Christianity; and if your conviction never brings you to it, it is plain you have something at the

bottom which you have not given up—and that is pride.

There can be no true repentance without faith. You may cast away your old habits, as the serpent casts off his skin—but if you are not resting all upon the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, and looking to be saved by simple faith in Him, you may be wise in your own eyes—but you are just ignorant of the root and fountain, the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last, in all true gospel religion. You may tell us you have repented—but if you have not at the same time laid hold on Christ, you have hitherto received the grace of God in vain.

Lastly, there can be no doubt that they who do not follow after holiness, who do not strive to glorify their Lord with their bodies and spirits, have received the grace of God in vain. About all other men we may not be able to decide with certainty—but about them the rule is laid down clearly.

"By their fruits you shall know them." The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. "And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." Those who are true believers in the Lord Jesus, love to tread in their Master's steps and learn of Him, and endeavor to be as like Him as possible in all their habits and tempers. I never can believe that men and women who name the name of Christ and yet neglect His will, and speak of the Holy Spirit while they resist Him, and talk of faith while they plainly do not believe, and of repentance while they continue impenitent, and of a heavenly life while they continue carnal—I never can believe that such, for all their fine words, have any portion or lot in the kingdom of God. These people are like sign-posts: they point the way towards Zion—but they never get one yard nearer to it themselves. Such people build with their lips—but pull down with their lives; they warn others of hell, and yet are **on the high road to the bottomless pit!**

I read that Christ redeems His flock from all iniquity, that He may purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works; and therefore, when I see men or women walking in the counsel of the ungodly and standing in the way of sinners, and sitting in the seat of the scornful—making provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof, conforming to the world in its vain and idle customs—I am at no loss about their character. They may often look like saints and talk like angels—they may be acquainted with all mysteries and all knowledge—but if sin reign in their mortal bodies that they can obey it in the lusts thereof without a struggle to be free, I hesitate not to tell them to their face—whoever they may be, "You have, so far, received the grace of God in vain."

But I may not go further on this point. Indeed, I tremble to think how many of you may come under the three classes that I have named. All who have never been truly penitent for sin—all who have never rightly closed with Christ—and all who do not strive to walk worthy of their high calling—all those have received the grace of God in vain. And if He whose winnowing fan is in His hand were now to come among you, and thoroughly purge His floor and cast out all the unprofitable hearers, oh, what a poor little handful might possibly be left!

III. I promised in the third place to say a few words about **the reasons why ministers are so anxious that you should not receive the grace of God in vain.** Oh! it is a strange thing we should have to *beseech* at all; you would not need it if we every Sunday had a purse of gold to divide among a congregation—but when we have to set before you the kingdom of God, righteousness, peace and everlasting life, alas! it is a great matter if we can get you to give your attention to our invitations, it is a great matter if you can be brought to listen patiently to the messengers and ambassadors of your Maker, your Redeemer, and your Judge.

Know, then, that we beseech you earnestly that you receive not the grace of God in vain, because the time is short, and every day that you continue lingering and undecided does shorten your opportunity for repentance and make your heart more dull and harder to be moved. The time you have is short for praying, short for Bible reading, short for breaking loose from this deceitful world, short for preparing for the world to come. Those fevers and diseases, which God shakes over the heads of many, might easily cut off twenty or thirty of the strongest of you—and where would your souls be? We beseech you because you have a battle to fight; the world, the flesh, the devil have all to be opposed; you have to put on the whole armor of God, to strive, to wrestle manfully against temptation; and if you really love the crown of glory, you cannot too soon come out from sinful ways and take your stand among the valiant for the truth upon the earth.

But if there were no other reason, we beseech you because of death and judgment. I urge upon you that an hour is meeting each of you like an armed man, when this body shall become the food of creeping things, and the soul shall be called to its last account. I see in my mind's eye the business of that solemn day—the great white throne, the assembled millions, the open books, the heavens departing as a scroll, the earth and the works that are therein melting with fervent heat; I hear the archangel's trumpet summoning the dead from north and south and east and west—and I tremble to think how those will fare, who have received the grace of God in vain. I tremble to think how they will be dealt with, who have a long account of Bibles unread and prayer neglected, churches despised and sacraments dishonored, ministers disregarded and sermons scorned. I tremble to find it plainly declared by Christ Himself, Christ the compassionate and tender-hearted, that even Sodom and Gomorrah shall be mercifully treated, compared with those who have been called upon to repent and have not repented, who have been invited to believe in Jesus and have not believed. And for all these causes, and for many more of which we cannot speak particularly, we do beseech you and implore you to beware lest you receive the grace of God in vain, to beware of hearing without improving, to beware of professing while you are not growing, to beware of giving your ears to God but not your heart.

See, now, most dearly beloved, does not this text divide you all in two separate groups? Does it not separate the good fish from the bad? You know in your own consciences it does. And where are the few among you who humbly trust that they have not altogether heard the gospel in vain? Hearken, O you who are really followers of Christ. Can you see in yourselves a feeling of hatred towards sin that once you never knew, a dependence on the blood of Jesus only to which you were once strangers, a thirsting after holiness with which you were once unacquainted? Then O rejoice with humble fear, and go forward in faith and hope; and though iniquity abounds, let not your love wax cold—but grow in grace and every day bring forth more fruit, and unto God Almighty, every one of you shall appear in Zion.

But are there not many of you who have all your lives received the grace of God to no purpose, and sided with the world? You know there are. I speak not these things to shame you—but as beloved to warn you, for it is my heart's desire and prayer to God that every soul among you may be saved; and I ask all such to listen to a word of exhortation. Consider, I beseech you, O you thoughtless ones,

consider the madness, the folly of your conduct. Surely you must feel that in the ways of worldly-mindedness and sin, there is no real satisfaction, and you must know that the end of these things is death. Surely God's offer of forgiveness is a gracious and a loving one. Oh, do not sell your souls for such miserable rewards as this world can give, and let it not be written of you this day that you were asked to turn and refused. You cannot really suppose that God's beloved Son was crucified and put to open shame, while heaven became black and the earth quaked and the veil was rent at the fearful sight—that you might be careless and live as you please, and yet be saved. Oh—you must have a low view of heaven if you think it can be won so cheaply!

Let me plead with you, let me plead the cause of your everlasting souls. I do not want to make you wretched, melancholy beings; the devil, who was a murderer and a liar from the beginning, tries to make you believe this—but it is not so. I want to provide you with a solid peace, such as this perishable world can neither give nor take away. Why will you cleave so closely to the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eye and the pride of life? They cannot comfort you in the days of trial which you must go through. Why is the everlasting gospel, which alone is good for every season, good for time and good for eternity, good for sorrow and good for joy, good for youth and good for age, good for life and good for death—why do you treat the gospel as a thing which will do you harm and poison the springs of your happiness? You cannot answer me; you know that I am speaking the words of soberness and truth. This very day I call upon you to begin a change—to forsake your sins, to care nothing for the opinion of the world, to receive your Father's invitation readily and willingly, meekly and honestly. I beseech you to turn and live—to repent and be converted—to believe and be saved!

Let not another harvest ripen on this earth and find you still among the number of those who are called the tares, still spiritually dark, sleeping and dead, still unprepared and unforgiven. Break up your fallow ground with the plough of repentance, seek your loving Redeemer with the tax collector's prayer, "Jesus, have mercy on me a sinner!" And thus, and thus only, when the mighty harvest of the earth is reaped, the angels shall gather you as precious wheat into the treasure-house of God, and you shall not be burned up as worthless chaff with unquenchable fire!

CONVERSION

by J. C. Ryle

"Repent therefore, and be converted." Acts 3:19

"I assure you, unless you are converted and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 18:3

The subject which forms the title of this paper is one which touches all mankind. It ought to come home to all ranks and classes, high or low, rich or poor, old or young, gentle or simple. Anyone may get to heaven without money, rank, or learning. No one, however wise, wealthy, noble, or beautiful, will ever get to heaven without **conversion**.

There are six points of view in which I wish to consider the subject of this paper. I will try to show that conversion is—

I. A Scriptural thing

II. A real thing

III. A necessary thing

IV. A possible thing

V. A happy thing

VI. A thing that may be seen

I. Let me show, in the first place, that **conversion is a SCRIPTURAL thing.**

I mean by this, that conversion is a thing plainly mentioned in the Bible. This is the first point we have to ascertain about anything in religion. It matters nothing who says a thing, and declares it to be religious truth; it matters nothing whether we like or dislike a doctrine. Is it in the Bible? That is the only question. If it is, we have no right to refuse it. If we reject a Bible truth because we do not like it, we do so at the peril of our souls, and might as well become infidels at once. This is a principle which ought never to be forgotten.

Let us turn to the Bible. Hear what David says, "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul", "Sinners shall be converted unto You." (Psalm 19:7; 51:13.) Hear what our Lord Jesus Christ says, "Except you be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. 18:3.) Hear what Peter says, "Repent, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." (Acts 3:19.) Hear what James says, "He which converts the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." (James 5:20.)

I could easily add to this Scriptural evidence. I could quote many passages in which the idea of conversion is contained, though the word itself is not used. To be renewed—to be transformed—to be created anew—to be raised from the dead—to be illuminated—to pass from death to life—to be born again—to put off the old man and put on the new man—all these are Scriptural expressions, which mean the same thing as conversion. They are all the same thing, seen from a different point of view. But enough is as good as a feast, in these matters. There can be no doubt of the truth of my first position—that conversion is a Scriptural thing. It is not a mere device of man's invention—it is in the Bible.

You may tell me, perhaps, that you do not care for "texts." You may say that you are not accustomed to make single texts decide questions in your religion. If this is your case, I am sorry for you. Our Lord Jesus Christ and His apostles used to quote single texts

frequently, and to make everything in their arguments hinge upon them. One plain text with them was sufficient to settle a point. Is it not a serious matter, that while the Lord Jesus and His apostles made such use of single texts, you do not care for them?

I entreat every reader of these pages to beware of ignorant prejudices on religious subjects. I have known people to find fault with doctrines and opinions as enthusiastic, fanatical, and absurd, in total ignorance that they were finding fault with Scripture itself! They have given sad proof that they spoke of things which they did not understand, and that they knew nothing, comparatively, of the contents of the Bible. It is recorded that, in Somersetshire, one hundred years ago, a great preacher was summoned before the magistrates for swearing in the pulpit. He had used in his sermon the well-known text, "He who believes not shall be damned" (Mark 16:16); and the constable was so ignorant that he did not know the preacher was quoting God's Word! I myself remember a lady of rank being very indignant, because a speaker at a Missionary meeting described the heathen as "having no hope." And yet the speaker had only used the very expression used by Paul, in describing the state of the Ephesians before the Gospel came to them! (Ephes. 2:12.) Beware of making a like mistake. Take care that you do not expose your own ignorance by talking against conversion. Search the Scriptures. Conversion is a **scriptural** thing.

II. Let me show, in the second place, that **conversion is a REAL thing**.

I feel it very needful to say something about this point. We live in an age of shams, cheats, deceptions, and impositions. It is an age of white-wash, varnish, lacquer, and veneer. It is an age of plaster, plating and gilding. It is an age of adulterated food, paste diamonds, false weights and measures, unsound timber, and shoddy clothing. It is an age of wind-bags, and whitened sepulchers, and cymbals in religion. I can hardly wonder that many regard all Christian professors as suspicious characters, if not hypocrites, and deny the reality of any such thing as conversion.

Still, notwithstanding all that such people may say, I assert confidently, that there is such a thing as conversion. There are to be seen among people, every here and there, unmistakable cases of a complete turning round of heart, character, tastes, and life—cases which deserve no other name than that of conversion. I say that when a man turns right round from sin to God—from worldliness to holiness—from self-righteousness to self-distrust—from carelessness about religion to deep repentance—from unbelief to faith—from indifference to Christ to strong love to Christ—from neglect of prayer and the Bible, to a diligent use of all means of grace—I say boldly, that such a man is a converted man. When a man's heart is turned upside down in the way I have described, so that he loves what he once hated, and hates what he once loved, I say boldly, that it is a case of conversion. To deny it, is mere obstinacy and affectation. Such a change can be described in no other way. By far the most suitable name that can be given to it is the Scriptural name—conversion.

Of such changes the Bible gives many unmistakable patterns. Let anyone read attentively the histories of Manasseh king of Judah, of Matthew the apostle, of the woman of Samaria, of Zaccheus the publican, of Mary Magdalene, of Saul of Tarsus, of the Philippian jailer, of Lydia the purple seller, of the Jews to whom Peter preached on the day of Pentecost, of the Corinthians to whom Paul preached. (2 Chron. 33:1-19. Matt. 9:9. John 4:1-29. Luke 19:1-10; 8:2. Acts 9:1-22; 16:14-34; 2:37-41. 1 Cor. 6:9-11.) In every one of these cases there was a mighty change. What can that change be called but conversion?

Of such changes the history of the Church in every age can supply many well-known examples. Let anyone study the life of Augustine, of Martin Luther, of Hugh Latimer, of John Bunyan, of Colonel Gardiner, of John Newton, of Thomas Scott. In everyone of these lives he will find a description of a mighty turning of heart, opinion, and conduct, towards God. What can that turning be called better than conversion?

Of such changes every man's own neighborhood and circle of acquaintances will furnish many specimens. Let any honest-minded person of observation look around him, and consider what I assert. Let him deny, if he can, that he can put his finger on men and women of his own age and standing, who are now utterly unlike what they once were in the matter of religion. About their own souls, and the importance of being saved—about sin, and God, and Christ, and repentance, and faith, and holiness—about Bible-reading, and praying—about all these things they are completely changed. I challenge any sensible man to deny that he knows such people. They are to be met with here and there in every part of the kingdom. Once more I ask, what can such changes be called but conversions?

I feel almost ashamed to dwell so long on this point. It seems like spending time in proving that two plus two make four, or that the sun rises in the east. But, alas, there are too many people who will allow nothing, and will dispute everything, in religion! They know that they are not yet converted themselves, and they therefore try hard to make out that nobody was ever converted at all! I trust I have given a sufficient answer to all such people. I have shown you that conversion is a real **true** thing.

III. Let me show, in the third place, that **conversion is a NECESSARY thing.**

This is a point of great importance. Some worthy people are ready enough to admit that conversion is a Scriptural truth and a reality—but not a thing which needs to be pressed on most English people. The heathen, they grant, need conversion. Even the thieves, and fallen characters, and inhabitants of jails, they allow, may require conversion. But to talk of conversion being necessary for Church-going people, is to talk of things which they cannot see at all. "Such people may, in some cases, need a little stirring up and amendment. They may not be quite as good as they ought to be—it would be better if they attended more to religion; but you have no right to say they need conversion! It is uncharitable, harsh, narrow-minded, bitter, wrong, to tell them they require conversion!"

This sadly common notion is a complete delusion. It is a pure invention of man's, without a scrap of foundation in God's Word. The Bible teaches expressly that the change of heart, called conversion, is a thing absolutely needed by everyone. It is needed because of the total corruption of human nature. It is needed because of the condition of every man's natural heart. All people born into the world, of every rank and nation, must have their hearts changed between the cradle and the grave, before they can go to heaven. All, all people, without exception, must be converted.

Without conversion of heart we cannot serve God on earth. We have naturally neither faith, nor fear, nor love, toward God and His Son Jesus Christ. We have no delight in His Word. We take no pleasure in prayer or communion with Him. We have no enjoyment in His ordinances, His house, His people, or His day. We may have a form of Christianity, and keep up a round of ceremonies and religious performances. But without conversion we have no more heart in our religion than a brick or a stone. Can a dead corpse serve

God? We know it cannot. Well, without conversion we are dead toward God.

Look round the congregation with which you worship every Sunday. Mark how little interest the great majority of them take in what is going on. Observe how listless, and apathetic, and indifferent, they evidently are about the whole affair. It is clear their hearts are not there! They are thinking of something else, and not of religion. They are thinking of business, or money, or pleasure, or worldly plans, or bonnets, or gowns, or new dresses, or amusements. Their bodies are there—but not their hearts. And what is the reason? What is it they all need? They need conversion. Without it they only come to church for fashion and form's sake, and go away from church to serve the world or their sins.

But this is not all. Without conversion of heart we could not enjoy heaven, if we got there. Heaven is a place where holiness reigns supreme, and sin and the world have no place at all. The company will all be holy; the employments will all be holy; it will be an eternal Sabbath-day. Surely if we go to heaven, we must have a heart in tune and able to enjoy it, or else we shall not be happy. We must have a nature in harmony with the element we live in, and the place where we dwell. Can a fish be happy out of water? We know it cannot. Well, without conversion of heart we could not be happy in heaven.

Look round the neighborhood in which you live, and the people with whom you are acquainted. Think what many of them would do if they were cut off forever from money, and business, and newspapers, and cards, and balls, and races, and hunting, and shooting, and worldly amusements! Would they like it? Think what they would feel if they were shut up forever with Jesus Christ, and saints, and angels! Would they be happy? Would the eternal company of Moses, and David, and Paul, be pleasant to those who never take the trouble to read what those holy men wrote? Would heaven's everlasting praise suit the taste of those who can hardly spare a few minutes in a week for private religion, even for prayer? There is but one answer to be given to all these questions. We must be converted before we can enjoy heaven. Heaven would be no heaven to any child of Adam without conversion.

Let no man deceive us. There are two things which are of absolute necessity to the salvation of every man and woman on earth. One of them is the mediatorial work of Christ for us—His atonement, satisfaction, and intercession. The other is the converting work of the Spirit in us—His guiding, renewing, and sanctifying grace. We must have both a title and a heart for heaven. Sacraments are not necessary to salvation—a man may be saved without them, like the penitent thief. An interest in Christ and conversion are absolutely necessary—without them no one can possibly be saved. All, all alike, high or low, rich or poor, old or young, gentle or simple, churchmen or dissenters, baptized or unbaptized, all must be converted or perish. There is no salvation without conversion. It is a **necessary** thing.

IV. Let me now show, in the fourth place, that **conversion is a POSSIBLE thing.**

I think I know the feelings which come across many people's minds, when they read the things which I am writing in this paper. They take refuge in the idea that such a change as conversion is quite impossible, except for a favored few. "It is all very well," they argue, "for parsons to talk of conversion; but the thing cannot be done; we have work to mind, families to provide for, business to attend to. It is no use expecting miracles now. We cannot be converted." Such thoughts are very common. The devil loves to put them before us, and our own lazy hearts are only too ready to receive them—but they will not stand examination. I am not afraid to lay it down that conversion is a possible thing. If it were not so, I would not say another word.

In saying this, however, I would be sorry to be mistaken. I do not for a moment mean that anyone can convert himself, change his own heart, take away his own corrupt nature, put in himself a new spirit. I mean nothing of the kind. I would as soon expect the dry bones in Ezekiel's vision to give themselves life. (Ezek. 37:3.) I only mean that there is nothing in Scripture, nothing in God, nothing in man's condition, which warrants anyone in saying, "I can never be converted." There lives not the man or woman on earth of whom it could be said, "their conversion is an impossibility." Anyone, however sinful and hardened, anyone may be converted.

Why do I speak so confidently? How is it that I can look round the world, and see the desperate wickedness that is in it, and yet despair of no living man's soul? How is it that I can say to anyone, however hard, fallen, and bad, "Your case is not hopeless—you, even you, may be converted?" I can do it because of the things contained in Christ's Gospel. It is the glory of that Gospel that under it nothing is impossible.

Conversion is a possible thing, because of the almighty power of our Lord Jesus Christ. In Him is life. In His hand are the keys of death and hell. He has all power in heaven and earth. He quickens whom He will. (John 1:4; Rev. 1:18; Matt. 28:18; John 5:21.) It is as easy to Him to create new hearts out of nothing, as it was to create the world out of nothing. It is as easy to Him to breathe spiritual life into a stony, dead heart, as it was to breathe natural life into the clay of which Adam was formed, and make him a living man. There was nothing He could not do on earth. Wind, sea, disease, death, the devil—all were obedient to His word. There is nothing that He cannot do in heaven at God's right hand. His hand is as strong as ever—His love is as great as ever. The Lord Jesus Christ lives, and therefore conversion is not impossible.

But beside this, conversion is a possible thing, because of the almighty power of the Holy Spirit, whom Christ sends into the hearts of all whom He undertakes to save. The same divine Spirit who co-operated with the Father and Son in the work of creation, co-operates specially in the work of conversion. It is He who conveys life from Christ, the great Fountain of Life, into the hearts of sinners. He who moved on the face of the waters before those wonderful words were spoken, "Let there be light," is He who moves over sinners' souls, and takes their natural darkness away. Great indeed is the invisible power of the Holy Spirit! He can soften that which is hard. He can bend that which is stiff and stubborn. He can give eyes to the spiritually blind, ears to the spiritually deaf, tongues to the spiritually mute, feet to the spiritually lame, warmth to the spiritually cold, knowledge to the spiritually ignorant, and life to the spiritually dead. "None teaches like Him!" (Job 36:22.) He has taught thousands of ignorant sinners, and never failed to make them "wise unto salvation." The Holy Spirit lives, and therefore conversion is never impossible.

What can you say to these things? Away with the idea forever that conversion is not possible. Cast it behind you—it is a temptation of the devil. Look not at yourself, and your own weak heart—for then you may well despair. Look upward at Christ, and the Holy Spirit, and learn that with them nothing is impossible. Yes! the age of spiritual miracles is not yet past! Dead souls in our congregations can yet be raised; blind eyes can yet be made to see; speechless prayerless tongues can yet be taught to pray. No one ought ever to despair. When Christ has left heaven, and laid down His office as the Savior of sinners—when the Holy Spirit has ceased to dwell in hearts, and

is no longer God—then, and not until then, men and women may say, "We cannot be converted." Until then, I say boldly, conversion is a possible thing. If people are not converted, it is because they "will not come to Christ for life." (John 5:40.) Conversion is **possible**.

V. Let me show, in the fifth place, that **conversion is a HAPPY thing.**

I shall have written in vain if I leave this point untouched. There are thousands, I firmly believe, who are ready to admit the truth of all I have said hitherto. Scriptural, real, necessary, possible—all this they willingly allow conversion to be. "Of course," they say, "we know it is all true. People ought to be converted." But will it increase a man's happiness to be converted? Will it add to a man's joys, and lessen his sorrows, to be converted? Here alas, is a point at which many stick fast. They have a secret, lurking fear, that if they are converted they must become melancholy, miserable, and low-spirited. Conversion and a sour face—conversion and a gloomy brow—conversion and an ill-natured readiness to snub young people, and put down all mirth—conversion and a sorrowful countenance—conversion and sighing and groaning—all these are things which they seem to think must go together! No wonder that such people shrink from the idea of conversion!

The notion I have just described is very common and very mischievous. I desire to protest against it with all my heart, and soul, and mind, and strength. I assert without hesitation, that the conversion described in Scripture is a happy thing and not a miserable one; and that if converted people are not happy, the fault must be in themselves. The happiness of a true Christian, no doubt, is not quite of the same sort as that of a worldly man. It is a calm, solid, deep flowing, substantial joy. It is not made up of excitement, levity, and boisterous spasmodic mirth. It is the sober, quiet joy of one who does not forget death, judgment, eternity, and a world to come, even in his chief mirth. But in the main I am confident the converted man is the happiest man.

What says the Scripture? How does it describe the feelings and experience of people who have been converted? Does it give any countenance to the idea that conversion is a sorrowful and melancholy thing? Let us hear what Levi felt, when he had left the receipt of custom to follow Christ. We read that "he made a great feast in his own house," as if it was an occasion of gladness. (Luke 5:29.) Let us hear what Zaccheus the publican felt, when Jesus offered to come to his house. We read that "he received Him joyfully." (Luke 19:6.) Let us hear what the Samaritans felt, when they were converted through Philip's preaching. We read that "there was great joy in that city." (Acts 8:8.) Let us hear what the Ethiopian eunuch felt in the day of his conversion. We read that "he went on his way rejoicing." (Acts 8:39.) Let us hear what the Philippian jailer felt in the hour of his conversion. We read that "he rejoiced, believing in God with all his house." (Acts 16:34) In fact the testimony of Scripture on this subject is always one and the same. Conversion is always described as the cause of joy and not of sorrow, of happiness and not of misery.

The plain truth, is that people speak ill of conversion because they know nothing really about it. They run down converted men and women as unhappy, because they judge them by their outward appearance of calmness, gravity, and quietness, and know nothing of their inward peace. They forget that it is not those who boast most of their own performances who do most, and it is not those who talk most of their happiness who are in reality the happiest people.

A converted man is happy, because he has peace with God. His sins are forgiven; his conscience is free from the sense of guilt—he can look forward to death, judgment, and eternity, and not feel afraid. What an immense blessing to feel forgiven and free! He is happy because he finds order in his heart. His passions are controlled, his affections are rightly directed. Everything in his inner man, however weak and feeble, is in its right place, and not in confusion. What an immense blessing order is! He is happy, because he feels independent of circumstances. Come what will, he is provided for—sickness, and losses, and death, can never touch his treasure in heaven, or rob him of Christ. What a blessing to feel independent! He is happy, because he feels ready. Whatever happens he is somewhat prepared—the great business is settled; the great concern of life is arranged. What a blessing to feel ready! These are indeed true springs of happiness. They are springs which are utterly shut up and sealed to an unconverted man. Without forgiveness of sins, without hope for the world to come, dependent on this world for comfort, unprepared to meet God, he cannot be really happy. Conversion is an essential part of true happiness.

Settle it in your mind today that the friend who labors for your conversion to God is the best friend that you have. He is a friend not merely for the life to come—but for the life that now is. He is a friend to your present comfort as well as to your future deliverance from hell. He is a friend for time as well as for eternity. Conversion is a **happy** thing.

VI. Let me now show you, in the last place, that **conversion is a thing that may be SEEN.**

This is a part of my subject which ought never to be overlooked. Well would it be for the Church and the world, if in every age it had received more attention. Thousands have turned away in disgust from Christianity, because of the wickedness of many who profess it. Hundreds have caused the very name of conversion to stink, by the lives they have lived after declaring themselves converted. They have fancied that a few spasmodic sensations and convictions were the true grace of God. They have imagined themselves converted, because their animal feelings were excited. They have called themselves "converts" without the slightest right or title to that honored name. All this has done immense harm, and it is doing peculiar harm in the present day. The times demand a very clear assertion of the great principle—that **true conversion is a thing that can always be seen.**

I admit fully that the manner of the Spirit's working is invisible. It is like the wind. It is like the attractive power of the magnet. It is like the influence of the moon upon the tides. There is something about it far beyond the reach of man's eyes or understanding. But while I admit this decidedly, I maintain no less decidedly that the effects of the Spirit's work in conversion will always be seen. Those effects may be weak and feeble at first—to the natural man they may hardly be visible, and not understood. But effects there always will be—some fruit will always be seen where there is true conversion. Where no effect can be seen, there you may be sure there is no grace. Where no visible fruit can be found, there you may be sure is no conversion.

Does anyone ask me what we may expect to see in a true conversion? I reply, There will always be something seen in a converted man's character, and feelings, and conduct, and opinions, and daily life. You will not see in him perfection; but you will see in him something peculiar, distinct, and different from other people. You will see him hating sin, loving Christ, following after holiness, taking pleasure in his Bible, persevering in prayer. You will see him penitent, humble, believing, temperate, charitable, truthful, good-tempered, patient, upright, honorable, kind. These, at any rate, will be his aims—these are the things which he will follow after,

however short he may come of perfection. In some converted people you will see these things more distinctly, in others less. This only I say, wherever there is conversion, something of this kind will be seen.

I care nothing for a conversion which has neither marks nor evidences to show. I shall always say, "Give me some marks if I am to think you are converted. Show me your conversion without any marks, if you can! I do not believe in it. It is worth nothing at all." You may call such doctrine legal if you please. It is far better to be called legal than to be an Antinomian. Never, never, will I allow that the blessed Spirit can be in a man's heart, when no fruit of the Spirit can be seen in his life. A conversion which allows a man to live in sin, to lie, and drink, and swear, is not the conversion of the Bible. It is a counterfeit conversion, which can only please the devil, and will lead the man who is satisfied with it, not to heaven—but to hell.

Let this last point sink down into your heart and never be forgotten. Conversion is not only a Scriptural thing, a real thing, a necessary thing, a possible thing, and a happy thing—there remains one more grand characteristic about it—it is a thing that will always be **seen**.

APPLICATION

And now let me wind up this paper by a few plain appeals to the consciences of all who read it. I have tried to the best of my power to unfold and explain the nature of conversion. I have endeavored to set it forth in every point of view. Nothing remains but to try to bring it home to the heart of everyone into whose hands this book may fall.

(1) First of all, I urge every reader of this paper to find out whether he is converted. I am not asking about other people. The heathen no doubt need conversion. The unhappy inhabitants of jails and reformatories need conversion. There may be people living near your own house who are open sinners and unbelievers, and need conversion. But all this is beside the question. I ask—Are **you** converted yourself?

Are you converted? It is no reply to tell me that many people are hypocrites and false professors. It is no argument to say that there are many sham revivals, and mock conversions. All this may be very true—but **the abuse of a thing does not destroy the use of it.** The circulation of bad money is no reason why there should not be good coin. Whatever others may be—Are **you** converted yourself?

Are you converted? It is no answer to tell me that you go to church or chapel, and have been baptized and admitted to the Table of the Lord. All this proves little—I could say as much for Judas Iscariot, Demas, Simon Magus, Ananias, and Sapphira. The question is still not answered. Is your heart changed? Are you really converted to God?

(2) In the next place, I urge every reader of this book who is not converted, never to rest until he is. Make haste awake to know your danger. Escape for your life! Flee from the wrath to come! Time is short! Eternity is near! Life is uncertain! Judgment is sure! Arise and call upon God. The throne of grace is yet standing—the Lord Jesus Christ is yet waiting to be gracious. The promises of the Gospel are wide, broad, full, and free—lay hold upon them this day. Repent, and believe the Gospel—repent, and be converted. Rest not, rest not, rest not, until you know and feel that you are a converted man.

(3) In the last place, I offer a word of exhortation to every reader who has reason to think that he has gone through that blessed change of which I have been speaking in this paper. You can remember the time when you were not what you are now. You can remember a time in your life when old things passed away, and all things became new. To you also I have something to say. Allow the word of friendly counsel, and lay it to heart.

(a) Do you think that you are converted? **Then give all diligence to make your calling and conversion sure.** Leave nothing uncertain that concerns your immortal soul. Labor to have the witness of the Spirit with your spirit, that you are a child of God. Assurance is to be had in this world, and assurance is worth the seeking. It is good to have hope—it is far better to feel sure.

(b) Do you think that you are converted? **Then do not expect impossibilities in this world.** Do not suppose the day will ever come when you will find no weak point in your heart, no wanderings in private prayer, no distraction in Bible-reading, no cold desires in the public worship of God, no flesh to mortify, no devil to tempt, no worldly snares to make you fall. Expect nothing of the kind. Conversion is not perfection! Conversion is not heaven! The old man within you is yet alive—the world around you is yet full of danger; the devil is not dead. Remember at your best, that a converted sinner is still a poor weak sinner, needing Christ every day. Remember this, and you will not be disappointed.

(c) Do you think that you are converted? **Then labor and desire to grow in grace every year that you live.** Look not to the things behind; be not content with old experience, old grace, old attainments in religion. Desire the sincere milk of the Word, that you may grow thereby. (1 Pet. 2:2.) Entreat the Lord to carry on the work of conversion more and more in your soul, and to deepen spiritual impressions within you. Read your Bible more carefully every year—watch over your prayers more jealously every year. Beware of becoming sleepy and lazy in your religion. There is a vast difference between the lowest and the highest forms in the school of Christ. Strive to get on in knowledge, faith, hope, charity, and patience. Let your yearly motto be, "Onward, Forward, Upward!" to the last hour of your life.

(d) Do you think you are converted? **Then show the value you place on conversion by your diligence in trying to do good to others.** Do you really believe it is a dreadful thing to be an unconverted man? Do you really think that conversion is an unspeakable blessing? Then prove it, prove it, prove it, by constant zealous efforts to promote the conversion of others. Look around the neighborhood in which you live—have compassion on the multitudes who are yet unconverted. Be not content with getting them to come to your church or chapel; aim at nothing less than their entire conversion to God. Speak to them, read to them, pray for them, stir up others to help them. But never, never—if you are a converted man, never be content to go to heaven alone!

FEW SAVED!

By J. C. Ryle, 1877

"Lord, are only a **few** people going to be saved?" He said to them, "Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because I tell you, many will try to enter and won't be able." Luke 13:23-24

"Enter in by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and **many** are those who enter in by it. How narrow is the gate, and restricted is the way that leads to life! **Few** are those who find it." Matthew 7:13-14

I take it for granted that every reader of this paper calls himself a Christian. You would not like to be reckoned a deist, or an infidel. You profess to believe the Bible to be true. The birth of Christ the Savior—the death of Christ the Savior—the salvation provided by Christ the Savior, all these are facts which you have probably never doubted. But, after all, will Christianity like this profit you anything at last? Will it do your soul any good when you die? In one word—*Shall you be saved?*

It may be you are now **young, healthy and strong**. Perhaps you never had a day's illness in your life, and scarcely know what it is to feel weakness and pain. You scheme and plan for future years, and feel as if death was far away, and out of sight. Yet, remember, death sometimes cuts off young people in the flower of their days. The strong and healthy of the family do not always live the Longest. Your sun may go down before your life has reached its mid-day. *Yet a little while, and you may be lying in a narrow, silent home, and the daisies may be growing over your grave!* And then, consider—*Shall you be saved?*

It may be you are **rich and prosperous** in this world. You have money, and all that money can command. You have "honor, love, obedience, troops of friends." But, remember, "riches are not forever." You cannot keep them longer than a few years. "It is appointed unto people once to die, and after this the judgment." (Prov. 27:24; Heb. 9:27.) And then, consider—*Shall you be saved?*

It may be you are **poor and needy**. You have scarcely enough to provide food and raiment for yourself and family. You are often distressed for lack of comforts, which you have no power to get. Like Lazarus, you seem to have "bad things" only, and not good. But, nevertheless, you take comfort in the thought that there will be an end of all this. There is a world to come, where poverty and need shall be unknown. Yet, consider a moment—*Shall you be saved?*

It may be you have **a weak and sickly body**. You hardly know what it is to be free from pain. You have so long parted company with health, that you have almost forgotten what it is like. You have often said in the morning, "Would God it were evening,"—and in the evening, "Would God it were morning." There are days when you are tempted by very weariness to cry out with Jonah, "It is better for me to die than to live." (Jonah 4:3.) But, remember, death is not all. There is something else beyond the grave! And then, consider—*Shall you be saved?*

If it was an easy thing to be saved, I would not write as I do in this volume. But is it so? Let us see.

If the common opinion of people of the world as to the number of the saved was correct, I would not trouble people with searching and hard questions. But is it so? Let us see.

If God had never spoken plainly in the Bible about the number of the saved, I might well be silent. But is it so? Let us see.

If experience and facts left it doubtful whether many or few would be saved, I might hold my peace. But is it so? Let us see.

There are four points which I propose to examine in considering the subject before us.

I. Let me explain *what it is to be saved.*

II. Let me point out *the mistakes which are common in the world about the number of the saved.*

III. Let me show *what the Bible says about the number of the saved.*

IV. Let me bring forward *some plain facts as to the number of the saved.*

A calm examination of these four points, in a day of wide-spread carelessness about vital religion, will be found of vast importance to our souls.

I. First of all let me explain **what it is to be saved.**This is a matter that must be cleared up. Until we know this, we shall make no progress. By being "saved" I may mean one thing, and you may mean another. Let me show you what the Bible says it is to be "saved," and then there will be no misunderstanding. To be saved, is not merely to profess and call ourselves Christians. We may have all the outward parts of Christianity, and yet be lost after all. We may be baptized into Christ's Church—go to Christ's table—have Christian knowledge—be reckoned Christian men and women—and yet be dead souls all our lives, and at last, in the judgment day, be found on Christ's left hand, among the goats! No—this is not salvation! Salvation is something far higher and deeper than this. Now what is it?

(a) To be saved, is to be delivered in this present life from the *GUILT of sin*, by faith in Jesus Christ, the Savior. It is to be pardoned, justified, and freed from every charge of sin, by faith in Christ's blood and mediation. Whoever with his heart believes on the Lord Jesus Christ, is a saved soul. He shall not perish. He shall have eternal life. This is the first part of salvation, and the root of all the rest. But this is not all.

(b) To be saved, is to be delivered in this present life from *the POWER of sin*, by being born again, and sanctified by the Holy Spirit. It is to be freed from the hateful dominion of sin, the world, and the devil, by having a new nature put in us by the Holy Spirit. Whoever is thus renewed in the spirit of his mind, and converted, is a saved soul. He shall not perish. He shall enter into the glorious kingdom of God. This is the second part of salvation. But this is not all.

(c) To be saved, is to be delivered in the day of judgment, from all *the awful CONSEQUENCES of sin*. It is to be *declared*

blameless, spotless, faultless, and complete in Christ, while others are found guilty, and condemned forever. It is to hear those comfortable words, "Come, you who are blessed!" While others are hearing those fearful words, "Depart, you who are cursed!" (Matt. 25:34, 41.) It is to be owned and confessed by Christ, as one of His dear children and servants, while others are disowned and cast off forever. It is to be pronounced free from the portion of the wicked—the worm which never dies, the fire which is not quenched—the weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth, which never ends. It is to receive the reward prepared for the righteous, in the day of Christ's second coming—the glorious body—the kingdom that is incorruptible—the crown that fades not away—and the joy that is for evermore. This is *complete salvation*. This is the "redemption" for which true Christians are bid to look and long. (Luke 21:28.) This is the heritage of all men and women who believe and are born again. By faith they are saved already. In the eye of God their final salvation is an absolutely certain thing. Their names are in the book of life. Their mansions in heaven are even now prepared. But still there is a fullness of redemption and salvation which they do not attain to while they are in the body. They are saved from the guilt and power of sin—but not from the necessity of watching and praying against it. They are saved from the fear and love of the world—but not from the necessity of daily fighting with it. They are saved from the service of the devil—but they are not saved from being vexed by his temptations. But when Christ comes the salvation of believers shall be complete. They possess it already in the bud. They shall see it then in the flower.

Such is salvation. It is to be saved from the guilt, power, and consequences of sin. It is to believe and be sanctified now, and to be delivered from the wrath of God in the last day. He who has the first part in the life that now is, shall undoubtedly have the second part in the life to come. Both parts of it hang together. What God has joined together, let no man dare to put asunder. Let none dream he shall ever be saved at last, if he is not born again first. Let none doubt, if he is born again here, that he shall assuredly be saved hereafter.

Let it never be forgotten that the chief object of a minister of the Gospel is to set forward *the salvation of souls.* I lay it down as a certain fact that he is no true minister who does not feel this. Talk not of a man's ordination! All may have been done correctly, and according to rule. He may wear a black coat, and be called a "reverend" man. But if the saving of souls is not the grand interest—the ruling passion—the absorbing thought of his heart—he is no true minister of the Gospel—he is a hireling, and not a shepherd. Congregations may have called him—but he is not called by the Holy Spirit. Bishops may have ordained him; but not Christ.

For what purpose do people suppose that ministers are sent forth? Is it merely to wear ecclesiastical vestments—and read the services—and preach a certain number of sermons? Is it merely to administer the sacraments, and officiate at weddings and funerals? Is it merely to get a comfortable living, and be in a respectable profession? No, indeed! we are sent forth for other ends than these. We are sent to turn people from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. We are sent to persuade people to flee from the wrath to come. We are sent to draw people from the service of the world to the service of God—to awaken the sleeping, to arouse the careless—and "by all means to save some." (1 Cor. 9:22.)

Think not that all is done when we have set up regular services, and persuaded people to attend them. Think not that all is done, when full congregations are gathered, and the Lord's table is crowded, and the parish school is filled. We want to see manifest work of the Spirit among people—an evident sense of sin—a lively faith in Christ—a decided change of heart—a distinct separation from the world—a holy walk with God. In one word, *we want to see souls saved!* And we are fools and impostors—blind leaders of the blind, if we rest satisfied with anything less.

After all the grand object of having a religion is *to be saved.* This is the great question that we have to settle with our consciences. The matter for our consideration is not whether we go to church or chapel—whether we go through certain forms and ceremonies—whether we observe certain days, and perform a certain number of religious duties. The matter is whether, after all, we shall be *"saved."* Without this all our religious doings are weariness and labor in vain.

Never, never let us be content with anything short of a *saving* religion. Surely to be satisfied with a religion which neither gives peace in life, nor hope in death, nor glory in the world to come—is childish folly.

II. Let me, in the second place, **point out the MISTAKES which are common in the world about the number of the saved.**

I need not go far for evidence on this subject. I will speak of things which every man may see with his own eyes, and hear with his own ears.

I will try to show that there is a wide-spread delusion abroad about this matter, and that this very delusion is one of the greatest dangers to which our souls are exposed.

(a) What then do people generally think about the spiritual state of others *while they are alive?* What do they think of the souls of their relatives, and friends, and neighbors, and acquaintances? Let us just see how that question can be answered.

They know that all around them are going to die, and to be judged. They know that they have souls to be lost or saved. And what, to all appearance, do they consider their end is likely to be?

Do they think those around them are in danger of hell? There is nothing whatever to show they think so. They eat and drink together; they laugh, and talk, and walk, and work together. They seldom or never speak to one another of God and eternity—of heaven and of hell. I ask anyone, who knows the world, as in the sight of God, is it not so?

Will they allow that anybody is wicked or ungodly? Never, hardly, whatever may be his way of life. He may be a breaker of the Sabbath; he may be a neglecter of the Bible; he may be utterly without evidence of true religion. His friends will often tell you, "It does not matter! He has a good heart at the bottom, and is not a grossly wicked man."

I ask anyone, who knows the world, as in God's sight, is it not so? And what does all this prove? It proves that people flatter themselves there is no great difficulty in getting to heaven. It proves plainly that people are of opinion that most people will be saved.

(b) But what do people generally think about the spiritual state of others *after they are dead?* Let us just see how this question can be answered.

People allow, if they are not infidels, that all who die have gone to a place of happiness, or of misery. And to which of these two places do they seem to think the greater part of people go, when they leave this world?

I say, without fear of contradiction, that there is an unhappily common fashion of speaking well of the condition of all who have departed this life. It matters little, apparently, how a man has behaved while he lived. He may have given no signs of repentance, or faith in Christ; he may have been ignorant of the plan of salvation set forth in the Gospel; he may have shown no evidence whatever of conversion or sanctification; he may have lived and died like a creature without a soul. And yet, as soon as this man is dead, people will dare to say that he is "probably happier than ever he was in his life." They will tell you complacently, that "he has gone to a better world." They will shake their heads gravely, and say they "hope he is in heaven." They will follow him to the grave without fear and trembling, and speak of his death afterwards as "a blessed change for him." They may have disliked him, and thought him a bad man while he was alive; but the moment he is dead they turn round in their opinions and say they trust he is gone to heaven! I have no wish to hurt anyone's feelings. I only ask anyone, who knows the world—Is it not true?

And what does it all prove? It just supplies one more awful proof that people are determined to believe it is an easy business to get to heaven. People will have it that most people are saved.

(**c) But again, what do people generally *think of ministers* who preach fully the doctrines of the New Testament?** Let us see how this question can be answered.

Send a clergyman into a parish who shall "declare all the counsel of God," and "keep back nothing that is profitable." Let him be one who shall clearly proclaim justification by faith—regeneration by the Spirit—and holiness of life. Let him be one who shall draw the line distinctly between the converted and the unconverted, and give both to sinners and to saints their portion. Let him frequently produce out of the New Testament a plain, unanswerable description of the true Christian's character. Let him show that no man who does not possess that character can have any reasonable hope of being saved. Let him constantly press that description on the consciences of his hearers, and urge upon them repeatedly that every soul who dies without that character will be lost. Let him do this, ably and affectionately, and after all, what will the result be?

The result will be, that while some few repent and are saved, the great majority of his hearers will not receive and believe his doctrine. They may not oppose him publicly. They may even esteem him, and respect him as an earnest, sincere, kind-hearted man, who means well. But they will go no further. He may show them the express words of Christ and His Apostles; he may quote text upon text, and passage upon passage—it will be to no purpose. The great majority of his hearers will think him "too strict," and "too close," and "too particular." They will say among themselves, that the world is not so bad as the minister seems to think—and that people cannot be so good as the minister wants them to be—and that after all, they hope they shall be all right at the last! I appeal to any minister of the Gospel, who has been any length of time in the ministry, whether I am not stating the truth. Are not these things so?

And what does it prove? It just makes one more proof that people generally are resolved to think that salvation is not a very hard business, and that after all most people will be saved.

Now what solid reason can people show us for these common opinions? Upon what Scripture do they build this notion, that salvation is an easy business, and that most people will be saved? What revelation of God can they show us, to satisfy us that these opinions are sound and true?

They have none—literally none at all. They have not a text of Scripture which, fairly interpreted, supports their views. They have not a reason which will bear examination. They speak smooth things about one another's spiritual state, just because they do not like to admit that there is danger. They build up one another into an easy, self-satisfied state of soul, in order to soothe their consciences and make things pleasant. They cry "Peace, peace," over one another's graves, because they want it to be so, and would gladly persuade themselves that so it is. Surely against such hollow, foundationless opinions as these, a minister of the Gospel may well protest.

The plain truth is that the world's opinion is worth nothing in matters of religion. About the price of an ox, or a horse, or a farm, or the value of labor—about wages and work—about money, cotton, coals, iron and corn—about arts, and sciences, and business—about railways, and commerce, and trade, and politics—about all such things the people of the world may give a correct opinion. But we must beware, if we love life, of being guided by man's judgment in the things that concern salvation. "The natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him." (1 Cor. 2:14.)

Let us remember, above all, that it never will do to think as others do, if we want to get to heaven. No doubt it is easy work to "go with the crowd" in religious matters. It will save us much trouble to swim with the stream and tide. We shall be spared much ridicule—we shall be freed from much unpleasantness. But let us remember, once for all, that the world's mistakes about salvation are many and dangerous. Unless we are on our guard against them we shall never be saved.

III. Let me show, in the third place, **what the Bible says about the number of the saved.**

There is only one standard of truth and error to which we ought to appeal. That standard is the Holy Scripture. Whatever is there written we must receive and believe; whatever cannot be proved by Scripture we ought to refuse.

Can any reader of this paper subscribe to this? If he cannot, there is little chance of his being moved by any words of mine. If he can, let him give me his attention for a few moments, and I will tell him some solemn things.

Let us look, then, for one thing, at one single text of Scripture, and examine it well. We shall find it in Matthew 7:13, 14. "Enter in by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter in by it. How narrow is the gate, and restricted is the way that leads to life! Few are those who find it." Now these are the words of our Lord Jesus Christ. They are the words of Him who was very God, and whose words shall never pass away. They are the words of Him who knew what was in man—who knew things to come, and things past—who knew that He should judge all people at the last day. And what do those words mean? Are they words which no man can understand without a knowledge of Hebrew or Greek? No—they are not! Are they a dark, unfulfilled prophecy, like the visions in Revelation, or the description of Ezekiel's temple? No—they are not! Are they a deep mysterious saying, which no human intellect can fathom? No—they are not! The words are clear, plain, and unmistakable. Ask

any laboring man who can read, and he will tell you so. There is only one meaning which can be attached to them. Their meaning is, that many people will be lost—and few will be saved.

Let us look, in the next place, at the whole history of mankind as respects religion, as we have it given in the Bible. Let us go through the whole four thousand years, over which the history of the Bible reaches. Let us find, if we can, one single period of time at which godly people were many, and ungodly people were few.

How was it in the *days of Noah?* The earth we are told expressly was "filled with violence." The imagination of man's heart was only "evil continually." (Gen. 6:5, 12.) "All flesh had corrupted his way." The loss of paradise was forgotten. The warnings of God, by Noah's mouth, were despised. And at length, when the flood came on the world and drowned every living thing, there were but eight people who had faith enough to flee for refuge to the ark! And were there many saved in those days? Let any honest reader of the Bible give an answer to that question. There can be no doubt what the answer must be.

How was it in the *days of Abraham, and Isaac, and Lot?* It is evident that in the matter of religion they stood very much alone. The family from which they were taken was a family of idolaters. The nations among whom they lived were sunk in gross darkness and sin. When Sodom and Gomorrah were burned there were not five righteous people to be found in the four cities of the plain. When Abraham and Isaac desired to find wives for their sons, there was not a woman in the land where they sojourned to whom they could wish to see them married. And were there many saved in those days? Let any honest reader of the Bible give an answer to that question. There can be no doubt what the answer must be.

How was it with Israel in the *days of the Judges?* No one can read the book of Judges, and not be struck with the sad examples of man's corruption which it affords. Time after time we are told of the people forsaking God, and following idols. In spite of the plainest warnings, they joined affinity with the Canaanites, and learned their works. Time after time we read of their being oppressed by foreign kings, because of their sins, and then miraculously delivered. Time after time we read of the deliverance being forgotten, and of the people returning to their former sins, like the sow that is washed to her wallowing in the mire. And were there many saved in those days? Let any honest reader of the Bible give an answer to that question. There can be no doubt what the answer must be.

How was it with Israel in the *days of the Kings?* From Saul, the first king, down to Zedekiah, the last king, their history is a melancholy account of backsliding, and declension, and idolatry—with a few bright exceptional periods. Even under the best kings there seems to have been a vast amount of unbelief and ungodliness, which only lay hid for a season, and burst out at the first favorable opportunity. Over and over again we find that under the most zealous kings "the high places were not taken away." Mark how even David speaks of the state of things around him, "Help, Lord, for the godly man ceases; for the faithful fail from among the children of men." (Psalm 12:1.) Mark how Isaiah describes the condition of Judah and Jerusalem, "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot, even unto the crown of the head, there is no soundness in it." "Except the Lord of Armies had left unto us a very small remnant, we would have been as Sodom, and would have been like unto Gomorrah." (Isaiah 1:5-9.) Mark how Jeremiah describes his time, "Run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if you can find a man, if there be any that executes judgment, that seeks the truth, and I will pardon it." (Jer. 5:1.) Mark how Ezekiel speaks of the people of his times, "The word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, the house of Israel is to me become dross—all they are brass, and iron, and tin and lead in the midst of the furnace—they are even the dross of silver." (Ezek. 22:17, 18.) Mark what he says in the sixteenth and twenty-third chapters of his prophecy about the kingdoms of Judah and Israel. And were there many saved in those days? Let any honest reader of the Bible give an answer to that question. There can be no doubt what the answer must be.

How was it with the Jews *when our Lord Jesus Christ was on earth?* The words of Saint John are the best account of their spiritual state, "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." (John 1:11.) He lived as no one born of woman had ever lived before—a blameless, harmless, holy life. "He went about doing good." (Acts 10:38.) He preached as no one ever preached before. Even the officers of his enemies confessed, "Never man spoke like this man." (John 7:46.) He did miracles to confirm His ministry, which, at first sight, we might have fancied would have convinced the most hardened. But, notwithstanding all this, the vast majority of the Jews refused to believe Him. Follow our Lord in all His travels over Palestine, and you will always find the same story. Follow Him into the city, and follow Him into the wilderness; follow Him to Capernaum and Nazareth, and follow Him to Jerusalem; follow Him among Scribes and Pharisees, and follow Him among Sadducees and Herodians—everywhere you will arrive at the same result. They were amazed—they were silenced—they were astonished—they wondered—but very few became disciples! The immense proportion of the nation would have none of His doctrine, and crowned all their wickedness by putting Him to death. And were there many saved in those days? Let any honest reader of the Bible give an answer to that question. There can be no doubt what the answer must be.

How was it with the world in the *days of the Apostles?* If ever there was a period when true religion flourished it was then. Never did the Holy Spirit call into the fold of Christ so many souls in the same space of time. Never were there so many conversions under the preaching of the Gospel as when Paul and his fellow-laborers were the preachers. But still, it is plain from the Acts of the Apostles, that true Christianity was "everywhere spoken against." (Acts 28:22.) It is evident that in every city, even in Jerusalem itself, true Christians were a small minority. We read of perils of all kinds which the Apostles had to go through—not only perils from without—but perils from within—not only perils from the heathen—but perils from false brethren. We hardly read of a single city visited by Paul where he was not in danger from open violence and persecution. We see plainly, by some of his epistles, that the professing Churches were mixed bodies, in which there were many rotten members. We find him telling the Philippians a painful part of his experience, "Many walk, of whom I tell you, even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ; whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is their shame, who mind earthly things." (Philip. 3:18, 19.) And were there many saved in those days? Let any honest reader of the Bible give an answer to this question. There can be no doubt what that answer must be.

I ask any honest-minded unprejudiced reader of the volume to weigh well the lessons of the Bible which I have just brought forward. Surely they are weighty and solemn, and deserve serious attention.

Let no one think to evade their force by saying that the Bible only tells the story of the Jews. Think not to comfort yourself by saying that "perhaps the Jews were more wicked than other nations, and many people were probably saved among other nations, though few were saved among the Jews." You forget that this argument goes against you. You forget that the Jews had light and privileges which the Gentiles had not, and with all their sins and faults, were probably the holiest and most moral nation upon earth. As to the

moral state of people among the Assyrians, and Egyptians, and Greeks, and Romans, it is fearful to think what it must have been. But this we may be sure of, that if many were ungodly among the Jews, the number was far greater among the Gentiles. If few were saved in the green tree, alas, how much fewer must have been saved in the dry!

The sum of the whole matter is this—the Bible and the people of the world, speak very differently about the number of the saved. According to the Bible, few will be saved—according to the people of the world, many. According to the people of the world few are going to hell—according to the Bible few are going to heaven. According to the people of the world salvation is an easy business—according to the Bible the way is narrow and the gate is strait. According to the people of the world few will be found at last seeking admission into heaven when too late—according to the Bible many will be in that sad condition, and will cry in vain, "Lord, Lord, open to us." Yet the Bible was never wrong yet. The most unlikely and improbable prophecies about Tyre, Egypt, Babylon, and Nineveh, have all come true to the letter. And as in other matters, so it will be about the number of the saved. The Bible will prove quite right and the people of the world quite wrong.

IV. Let me show, in the last place, **some plain facts about the number of the saved.**

I ask particular attention to this part of the subject. I know well that people flatter themselves that the world is far better and wiser than it was 1800 years ago. We have churches, and schools, and books. We have civilization, and liberty, and good laws. We have a far higher standard of morality in society than that which once prevailed. We have the power of obtaining comforts and enjoyments which our forefathers knew nothing of. Steam, and gas, and electricity, and chemistry, have effected wonders for us. All this is perfectly true. I see it, and I am thankful. But all this does not diminish the importance of the question—*Are there few or many of us likely to be saved?*

I am thoroughly satisfied that the importance of this question is painfully overlooked. I am persuaded that the views of most people about the quantity of unbelief and sin in the world, are utterly inadequate and incorrect. I am convinced that very few people, whether ministers or private Christians, at all realize how few there are in a way to be saved. I want to draw attention to the subject, and I will therefore bring forward a few plain facts about it.

But where shall I go for these facts? I might easily turn to the millions of heathen, who in various parts of the world are worshiping they know not what. But I shall not do so. I might easily turn to the millions of Muhammadans who honor the Koran more than the Bible, and the false prophet of Mecca more than Christ. But I shall not do so. I might easily turn to the millions of Roman Catholics who are making the Word of God of no effect by their traditions. But I shall not do so. I shall look nearer home. I shall draw my facts from the land in which I live, and then ask every honest reader whether it be not strictly true that *few are saved.*

I invite any intelligent reader of these pages to imagine himself in any parish in Protestant England or Scotland at this day. Choose which you please, a town parish, or a country parish—a great parish or a small one. Let us take our New Testaments in our hands. Let us sift the Christianity of the inhabitants of this parish, family by family, and man by man. Let us put on one side anyone who does not possess the New Testament evidence of being a true Christian. Let us deal honestly and fairly in the investigation, and not allow that anyone is a true Christian, who does not come up to the New Testament standard of faith and practice. Let us count every man a saved soul in whom we see something of Christ—some evidence of true repentance—some evidence of saving faith in Jesus, some evidence of real evangelical holiness. Let us reject every man in whom, on the most charitable construction, we cannot see these evidences, as one "weighed in the balances, and found lacking." Let us apply this sifting process to any parish in this land, and see what the result would be.

(a) Let us set aside, first of all, those people in a parish who are ***living in any kind of open sin***. By these I mean such as fornicators, and adulterers, and liars, and thieves, and drunkards, and cheats, and revilers, and extortioners. About these I think there can be no difference of opinion. The Bible says plainly, that "those who do such things, shall not inherit the kingdom of God." (Gal. 5:21) Now will these people be saved? The answer is clear to my own mind—In their present condition they will not.

(b) Let us set aside, in the next place, those people who are ***Sabbath-breakers***. I mean by this expression, those who seldom or never go to a place of worship, though they have the power, those who do not give the Sabbath to God—but to themselves—those who think of nothing but doing their own ways, and finding their own pleasure upon Sundays. They show plainly that they are not fit for heaven! The inhabitants of heaven would be company they could not like. The employments of heaven would be a weariness to them, and not a joy. Now will these people be saved? The answer is clear to my mind—In their present condition they will not.

(c) Let us set aside, in the next place, all those people who are ***careless and thoughtless professors***. I mean by this expression, those who attend many of the outward ordinances of religion—but show no signs of taking any real interest in its doctrines and substance. They care little whether the minister preaches the Gospel or not. They care little whether they hear a good sermon or not. They would care little if all the Bibles in the world were burned. They would care little if an Act of Parliament were passed forbidding anyone to pray. In short, religion is not the "one thing needful" with them. Their treasure is on earth. They are just like Gallio, to whom it mattered little whether people were Jews or Christians—he "cared for none of these things." (Acts 18:17.) Now will these people be saved? The answer is clear to my own mind In their present condition they will not.

(d) Let us set aside, in the next place, all those who are ***formalists and self-righteous***. I mean by this expression, those who value themselves on their own regularity in the use of the forms of Christianity, and depend either directly or indirectly on their own doings for their acceptance with God. I mean all who rest their souls on any work but the work of Christ, or any righteousness but the righteousness of Christ. Of such the Apostle Paul has expressly testified, "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh living be justified.", "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." (Rom. 3:20; 1 Cor. 3:11.) And dare we say, in the face of such texts, that such as these will be saved? The answer is plain to my own mind—In their present condition they will not.

(e) Let us set aside, in the next place, all those who ***know the Gospel with their heads—but do not obey it with their hearts***. These are those unhappy people who have eyes to see the way of life—but have not will or courage to walk in it. They approve sound doctrine. They will not listen to preaching which does not contain it. But the fear of man, or the cares of the world, or the love of money, or the dread of offending relations, perpetually holds them back. They will not come out boldly, and take up the cross, and confess Christ before people. Of these also the Bible speaks expressly, "Faith, if it has not works, is dead, being alone." "To him that

knows to do good, and does it not, to him it is sin." "If any man is ashamed of Me and of my words, of him will the Son of man be ashamed when He shall come in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels." (James 2:17; 4:17; Luke 9:26.) Shall we say that such as these will be saved? The answer is clear to my own mind—In their present condition they will not.

(f) Let us set aside, in the last place, all those who are ***hypocritical professors***. I mean by that expression, all those whose religion consists in talk and high profession, and in nothing besides. These are they of whom the prophet Ezekiel speaks, saying, "With their mouth they show much love—but their heart goes after their covetousness." "They profess that they know God—but in works they deny Him." "They have a form of godliness—but they have not the power of it." (Ezek. 33:31; Titus 1:16; 2 Tim. 3:5.) They are saints at church, and saints to talk to in public. But they are not saints in private, and in their own homes; and worst of all, they are not saints in heart. There can be no dispute about such people. Shall we say that they will be saved? There can only be one answer—In their present condition they will not.

And now, after setting aside these classes which I have described, I ask any sensible thinking reader to tell me how many people in any parish in England will there be left behind? How many, after sifting a parish thoroughly and honestly—how many men and women will remain who are in a way to be saved? How many true penitents—how many real believers in Christ, how many truly holy people will there be found? I put it to the conscience of every reader of this volume to give an honest answer, as in the sight of God. I ask you whether, after sifting a parish with the Bible in the fashion described, you can come to any conclusion but this, that few people—sadly few people, are in a way to be saved?

It is a painful conclusion to arrive at—but I know not how it can be avoided. It is a fearful and tremendous thought, that there should be so many churchmen in England, and so many dissenters, so many seat-holders, and so many pew-renters, so many hearers, and so many communicants—and yet, after all, so few in a way to be saved! But the only question is, Is it not true? It is vain to shut our eyes against facts. It is useless to pretend not to see what is going on around us. The statements of the Bible and the facts of the world we live in will lead us to the same conclusion—*Many are being lost, and few being saved!*

(a) I know well that many do not believe what I am saying, because they *think there is an immense quantity of* ***death-bed repentance***. They flatter themselves that multitudes who do not live religious lives will yet die religious deaths. They take comfort in the thought that vast numbers of people turn to God in their last illness and are saved at the eleventh hour. I will only remind such people that all the experience of ministers is utterly against the theory. **People generally die just as they have lived.** True repentance is never too late—but repentance deferred to the last hours of life is seldom true. A man's life is the surest evidence of his spiritual state, and if lives are to be witnesses, then few are likely to be saved.

(b) I know well that many do not believe what I am saying, because ***they imagine that it contradicts the mercy of God***. They dwell on the love to sinners which the Gospel reveals. They point to the offers of pardon and forgiveness which abound in the Bible. They ask us if we maintain, in the face of all this, that only few people will be saved. I answer, I will go as far as anyone in exalting God's mercy in Christ—but I cannot shut my eyes against the fact that this mercy profits no man so long as it is wilfully refused. I see nothing lacking, on God's part, for man's salvation. I see room in heaven for the chief of sinners. I see willingness in Christ to receive the most ungodly. I see power in the Holy Spirit to renew the most ungodly. But I see, on the other hand, desperate **unbelief** in man—he will not believe what God tells him in the Bible. I see desperate **pride** in man—he will not bow his heart to receive the Gospel as a little child. I see desperate **sloth** in man—he will not take the trouble to arise and call upon God. I see desperate **worldliness** in man—he will not loose his hold on the poor perishable things of time, and consider eternity. In short, I see the words of our Lord continually verified, "You will not come unto Me, that you might have life" (John 5:40), and therefore I am driven to the sorrowful conclusion that few are likely to be saved.

(c) I know well that many will not believe what I am saying, because ***they refuse to observe the evil there is in the world***. They live in the midst of a little circle of good people—they know little of anything that goes on in the world outside that circle. They tell us the world is a world which is rapidly improving and going on to perfection. They count up on their fingers the number of good ministers whom they have heard and seen in the last year. They call our attention to the number of religious societies, and religious meetings, to the money which is subscribed, to the Bibles and tracts which are being constantly distributed. They ask us if we really dare to say, in the face of all this, that few are in the way to be saved. In reply, I will only remind these amiable people, that there are other people in the world besides their own little circle, and other men and women besides the chosen few whom they know in their own congregation. I entreat them to open their eyes, and see things as they really are. I assure them there are things going on in this country of ours of which they are at present in happy ignorance. I ask them to sift any parish or congregation in England, with the Bible, before they condemn me hastily. I tell them, if they will do this honestly, they will soon find that I am not far wrong, when I say that few are likely to be saved.

(d) I know well that many will not believe me, because ***they think such a doctrine very narrow-minded and exclusive***. I utterly deny the charge. I disclaim any sympathy with those Christians who condemn everybody outside their own church, and appear to shut the door of heaven against everybody who does not see everything with their eyes. Whether Roman Catholics, or Episcopalians, or Free Churchmen, or Baptists, or Plymouth Brethren—whoever does anything of this kind, I reckon him a narrow-minded man. I have no desire to shut up the kingdom of heaven against anyone. All I say is, that none will enter that kingdom, except converted, believing, and holy souls; and all I take on myself to assert is, that both the Bible and facts combine to prove that such people are few.

(e) I know well that many will not believe what I am saying, because ***they think it a gloomy, uncharitable doctrine***. It is easy to make vague, general assertions of this kind. It is not so easy to show that any doctrine deserves to be called "gloomy and uncharitable" which is scriptural and true. There is a spurious charity, I am afraid, which dislikes all strong statements in religion, a charity which would have no one interfered with—charity which would have everyone let alone in his sins—a charity which, without evidence, takes for granted that everybody is going to be saved—a charity which never doubts that all people are going to heaven, and seems to deny the existence of such a place as hell. But such charity is not the charity of the New Testament, and does not deserve the name. Give me the charity which tries everything by the test of the Bible, and believes nothing and hopes nothing that is not sanctioned by the Word. Give me the charity which Paul describes to the Corinthians—the charity which is not blind, and deaf, and stupid—but has eyes to see and senses to discern between him that fears God and him that fears Him not. Such charity will rejoice in nothing but "the truth," and will confess with sorrow that I tell nothing but the truth when I say that few are likely to be saved.

(f) I know well that many will not believe me, because ***they think it presumptuous to have any opinion at all about the number of the saved***. But will these people dare to tell us that the Bible has not spoken plainly as to the character of saved souls? And will they dare to say that there is any standard of truth except the Bible? Surely there can be no presumption in asserting that which is agreeable to the Bible. I tell them plainly that the charge of presumption does not lie at my door. I say that he is the truly presumptuous man who, when the Bible has said a thing clearly and unmistakably, refuses to receive it.

(g) I know, finally, that many will not believe me, because ***they think my statement extravagant, and unwarrantable***. They regard it as a piece of fanaticism, unworthy of the attention of a rational man. They look on ministers who make such assertions, as weak-minded people, and lacking in common sense. I can bear such imputations unmoved. I only ask those who make them to show me some plain proof that they are right and I am wrong. Let them show me, if they can, that anybody is likely to get to heaven whose heart is not renewed, who is not a believer in Jesus Christ, who is not a spiritually-minded and holy man. Let them show me, if they can, that people of this description are many, compared with those who are not. Let them, in one word, point to any place on earth where the great majority of the people are not ungodly, and the truly godly are not a little flock. Let them do this, and I will grant they have done right to disbelieve what I have said. Until they do this, I must maintain the sorrowful conclusion—that few people are likely to be saved.

And now it only remains to make some **practical application** of the subject of this paper. I have set forth as plainly as I can the character of saved people. I have shown the painful delusions of the world as to the number of the saved. I have brought forward the evidence of the Bible on the subject. I have drawn from the world around us plain facts in confirmation of the statements I have made. May the Lord grant that all these solemn truths may not have been exhibited in vain!

I am quite aware that I have said many things in this paper which are likely to give offence. I know it. It must be so. The point which it handles is far too serious and heart-searching to be otherwise than offensive to some. But I have long had a deep conviction that the subject has been painfully neglected, and that few things are so little realized as the comparative numbers of the lost and saved. All that I have written, I have written because I firmly believe it to be God's truth. All that I have said, I have said, not as an enemy but as a lover of souls. You do not count him an enemy who gives you a bitter medicine to save your life. You do not count him an enemy who shakes you roughly from your sleep when your house is on fire. Surely you will not count me an enemy because I tell you strong truths for the benefit of your soul. I appeal, as a friend, to every man or woman into whose hands this volume has come. Bear with me, for a few moments, while I say a few last words to impress the whole subject on your conscience.

(a) Are there few saved? Then, **shall you be one of the few?** Oh, that you would see that salvation is the one thing needful! Health, and riches, and titles, are not needful things. A man may gain heaven without them. But what shall the man do who dies not saved! Oh, that you would see that you must have salvation now, in this present life, and lay hold upon it for your own soul! Oh, that you would see that "saved" or "not saved" is the grand question in religion! High Church or Low Church, Churchman or Dissenter, all these are trifling questions in comparison. What a man needs in order to get to heaven is an actual personal interest in Christ's salvation. Surely, if you are not saved, it will be better at last never to have been born!

(b) Are there few saved? Then, **if you are not one of the few already, strive to be one without delay.** I know not who and what you are—but I say boldly, Come to Christ and you shall be saved. The gate that leads to life may be strait—but it was wide enough to admit Manasseh, and Saul of Tarsus—and why not you? The way that leads to life may be narrow—but it is marked by the footsteps of thousands of sinners like yourself. All have found it a good way. All have persevered, and got safely home at last. Jesus Christ invites you. The promises of the Gospel encourage you. Oh, strive to enter in without delay!

(c) Are there few saved? Then, **if you are doubtful whether you are one of the few, make sure work at once, and be doubtful no more.** Leave no stone unturned in order to ascertain your own spiritual state. Be not content with vague hopes and trusts. Rest not on warm feelings and temporary desires after God. Give diligence to make your calling and election sure. Oh, give me leave to say, that if you are content to live on uncertain about salvation, you live the maddest life in the world! The fires of hell are before you—and you are uncertain whether your soul is saved. This world below must soon be left—and you are uncertain whether you have a mansion prepared to receive you in the world above. The judgment will soon be set—and you are uncertain whether you have an Advocate to plead your cause. Eternity will soon begin—and you are uncertain whether you are prepared to meet God. Oh, sit down this day, and study the subject of salvation! Give God no rest until uncertainty has disappeared, and you have got hold of a reasonable hope that you are saved.

(d) Are there few saved? Then, **if you are one of the saved, be thankful.** Chosen and called of God—while thousands around you are sunk in unbelief; seeing the kingdom of God—while multitudes around you are utterly blind; delivered from this present evil world—while crowds are overcome by its love and fear; taught to know sin, and God, and Christ—while numbers, to all appearance as good as you, live in ignorance and darkness! Oh, you have reason every day to bless and praise God! Whence came this sense of sin, which you now experience? Whence came this love of Christ—this desire after holiness—this hungering after righteousness—this delight in the Word? Has not free grace done it, while many a companion of your youth still knows nothing about it, or has been cut off in his sins? You ought indeed to bless God! Surely Whitefield might well say, that one anthem among the saints in heaven will be "Why me, Lord? Why did You choose me?"

(e) Are there few saved? Then, **if you are one, do not wonder that you often find yourself standing alone.** I dare believe you are sometimes almost brought to a standstill, by the corruption and wickedness that you see in the world around you. You see false doctrine abounding. You see unbelief and ungodliness of every description. You are sometimes tempted to say, "Can I really be in the right in my religion? Can it really be that all these people are in the wrong?" Beware of giving way to thoughts like these. Remember, you are only having practical proof of the truth of your Master's sayings. Think not that His purposes are being defeated. Think not that His work is not going forward in the world. He is still taking out a people to His praise. He is still raising up witnesses to Himself, here and there, all over the world. The saved will yet be found to be a "multitude that no man can number," when all are gathered together at last. (Rev. 7:9.) The earth will yet be filled with the knowledge of the Lord. All nations shall serve Him—all kings shall yet delight to do Him honor. But the night is not yet spent. The day of the Lord's power is yet to come. In the meantime all is going on as He foretold 1800 years ago—many are being lost and few saved.

(f) Are there few saved? Then, **if you are one, do not be afraid of having too much godliness.** Settle it down in your mind that you will aim at the highest degree of holiness, and spiritual-mindedness, and consecration to God—that you will not be content with any low degree of sanctification. Resolve that, by the grace of God, you will make Christianity beautiful in the eyes of the world. Remember that the children of the world have but few patterns of true religion before them. Endeavor, as far as in you lies, to make those few patterns recommend the service of your Master. Oh, that every true Christian would recollect that he is set as a lighthouse in the midst of a dark world, and would labor so to live that every part of him may reflect light, and no side be dim!

(g) Are there few saved? Then, **if you are one, use every opportunity of trying to do good to souls.** Settle it down in your mind that the vast majority of people around you are in dreadful danger of being lost forever. Work every engine for bringing the Gospel to bear upon them. Help every Christian enterprise for plucking brands from the burning. Give liberally to every Society which has for its object, the spread the everlasting Gospel. Throw all your influence heartily and unreservedly into the cause of doing good to souls. Live like one who thoroughly believes that time is short and eternity near—the devil strong and sin abounding—the darkness very great and the light very small—the ungodly very many and the godly very few—the things of the world mere transitory shadows, and heaven and hell the great substantial realities.

Alas, indeed, for the lives that many believers live! How cold are many, and how frozen—how slow to do decided things in religion, and how afraid of going *too far*—how backward to attempt anything new—how ready to discourage a good movement—how ingenious in discovering reasons why it is best to sit still—how unwilling ever to allow that "the time" for active exertion is come—how wise in finding fault—how shiftless in devising plans to meet growing evils! Truly a man might sometimes think, when he looks at the ways of many who are counted believers, that all the world was going to heaven, and hell was nothing but a lie.

Let us all beware of this state of mind! Whether we like to believe it or not, hell is filling fast. Christ is daily holding out His hand to a disobedient people. Many are in the broad way that leads to destruction! Few are in the way that leads to life! Many, many are likely to be lost. Few, few are likely to be saved.

Once more I ask every reader, as I asked at the beginning of this paper—*Shall you be saved?* If you are not saved already, my heart's desire and prayer to God is, that you may seek salvation without delay. If you are saved, my desire is that you may live like a saved soul—and like one who knows that saved souls are few.

"Enter in by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter in by it. How narrow is the gate, and restricted is the way that leads to life! Few are those who find it." Matthew 7:13-14

ALIVE OR DEAD?

by J. C. Ryle

"And He has made you **alive**, who were once **dead** in trespasses and sins." Ephesians 2:1

The question which forms the title of this paper deserves a thousand thoughts. I invite every reader of this volume to look at it carefully, and ponder it well. Search your own heart, and do not lay down this book without solemn self-inquiry. Are you among the living, or among the dead?

Listen to me while I try to help you to an answer. Give me your attention, while I unfold this matter, and show you what God has said about it in the Scriptures. If I say hard things, it is not because I do not love you. I write as I do, because I desire your salvation. **He is your best friend who tells you the most truth.**

I. First then, **let me tell you what we all are by nature. We are spiritually DEAD!**

"Dead" is a strong word—but it is not my own coining and invention. I did not choose it. The Holy Spirit taught Paul to write it down about the Ephesians, ""And He has made you alive, who were once **dead** in trespasses and sins." The Lord Jesus Christ made use of it in the parable of the prodigal son, "This my son was *dead* and is alive again." (Luke 15:24, 32.) You will read it also in the first Epistle to Timothy, "She that lives in pleasure is *dead* while she lives." (1 Tim. 5:6.) Shall a mortal man be wise above that which is written? Must I not take heed to speak that which I find in the Bible, and neither less nor more?

"Dead" is an awful idea, and one that man is most unwilling to receive. He does not like to allow the whole extent of his soul's disease—he shuts his eyes to the real amount of his danger. Many a one will allow us to say, that naturally most people "are not quite what they ought to be—they are thoughtless—they are unsteady—they are mirthful—they are wild—they are not serious enough." But dead? Oh, no! We must not mention it. It is going too far to say that. The idea is a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence."

"This is the reason we are no better, because our disease is not perfectly known—this is the reason we are no better, because we know not how bad we are."—*Usher's Sermons, preached at Oxford,* 1650.

But what we like in religion is of very little consequence. The only question is, What is written? What says the Lord? God's thoughts are not man's thoughts, and God's words are not man's words. God says of every living person who is not a real, thorough, genuine, decided Christian, be he high or low, rich or poor, old or young—*he is spiritually dead.*

In this, as in everything else, God's words are right. Nothing could be said more correct, nothing more accurate, nothing more faithful, nothing more true. Stay a little, and let me reason this out with you. Come and see.

What would you have said, if you had seen Joseph weeping over his father Jacob? "He fell upon his face, and wept upon him, and kissed him." (Gen. 50:1.) But there was no reply to his affection. All about that aged countenance was unmoved, silent, and still. Doubtless you would have guessed the reason. Jacob was dead.

What would you have said, if you had heard the Levite speaking to his wife, when he found her lying before the door in Gibeah? "Up," he said, "and let us be going. But she did not answer." (Judges 19:28.) His words were thrown away. There she lay, motionless, stiff, and cold. You know the cause. She was dead.

What would you have thought, if you had seen the Amalekite stripping Saul of his royal ornaments in Mount Gilboa? He "took from him the crown that was upon his head, and the bracelet that was on his arm." (2 Sam. 1:10.) There was no resistance. Not a muscle moved in that proud face—not a finger was raised to prevent him. And why? Saul was dead.

What would you have thought, if you had met the widow's son in the gate of Nain, lying in a coffin, wrapped about with grave-clothes, followed by his weeping mother, carried slowly towards the tomb? (Luke 7:12.) Doubtless it would have been all clear to you. It would have needed no explanation. The young man was dead.

Now I say this is just the condition of every man by nature in the matter of his soul. I say this is just the state of the vast majority of people around us in spiritual things. God calls to them continually—by mercies, by afflictions, by ministers, by His word—but they do not hear His voice. The Lord Jesus Christ mourns over them, pleads with them, sends them gracious invitations, knocks at the door of their hearts—but they do not regard it. The crown and glory of their being, that precious jewel, their immortal soul, is being seized, plundered, and taken away—and they are utterly unconcerned. The devil is carrying them away, day after day, along the broad road that leads to destruction—and they allow him to make them his captives without a struggle. And this is going on everywhere—all around us—among all classes—throughout the length and breadth of the land. You know it in your own conscience while you read this paper—you must be aware of it. You cannot deny it. And what then, I ask, can be said more perfectly true than that which God says—we are all by nature spiritually *dead?*

Yes! when a man's heart is cold and unconcerned about religion—when his hands are never employed in doing God's work—when his feet are not familiar with God's ways—when his tongue is seldom or never used in prayer and praise—when his ears are deaf to the voice of Christ in the Gospel—when his eyes are blind to the beauty of the kingdom of heaven—when his mind is full of the world, and has no room for spiritual things—when these marks are to be found in a man, the word of the Bible is the right word to use about him—and that word is, "Dead."

We may not like this perhaps. We may shut our eyes both to facts in the world, and texts in the Word. But God's truth must be spoken, and to keep it back does positive harm. Truth must be spoken, however condemning it may be. So long as a man does not serve God with body, soul, and spirit, he is not really alive. So long as he puts the first things last and the last first, buries his talent like an unprofitable servant, and brings the Lord no revenue of honor, so long in God's sight he is dead. He is not filling the place in creation for which he was intended; he is not using his powers and faculties as God meant them to be used. The poet's words are strictly true—

"He only lives, who lives to God,
And all are dead beside."

This is the true explanation of sin not felt, and sermons not believed—and good advice not followed—and the Gospel not embraced—and the world not forsaken—and the cross not taken up—and self-will not mortified—and evil habits not laid aside—and the Bible seldom read—and the knee never bent in prayer. Why is all this on every side. The answer is simple—*Men are dead!*

This is the true account of that army of excuses, which so many make "with one consent." Some have no learning, and some have no time. Some are consumed with business and the care of money, and some with poverty. Some have difficulties in their own families, and some in their own health. Some have peculiar obstacles in their calling, which others, we are told, cannot understand; and others have peculiar drawbacks at home, and they wait to have them removed. But God has a shorter word in the Bible, which describes all these people at once. He says, *They are dead.* If spiritual life began in these people's hearts, their excuses would soon vanish away.

This is the true explanation of many things which wring a faithful minister's heart. Many around him never attend a place of worship at all. Many attend so irregularly, that it is clear they think it of no importance. Many attend once on a Sunday who might just as easily attend twice. Many never come to the Lord's table—and never appear at a weekday means of grace of any kind. And why is all this? Often, far too often, there can be only one reply about these people—*They are dead.*

See now how all professing Christians should examine themselves and try their own state. It is not in churchyards alone where the dead are to be found; there are only too many inside our churches, and close to our pulpits—too many on the benches, and too many in the pews. The land is like the valley in Ezekiel's vision, "full of bones, very many, and very dry." (Ezek. 37:2) There are dead souls in all our parishes, and dead souls in all our streets. There is hardly a family in which all live to God; there is hardly a house in which there is not someone dead. Oh, let us all search and look at home! Let us prove our own selves. Are we *alive or dead?*

See, too, how sad is the condition of all who have gone through no spiritual change, whose hearts are still the same as in the day they were born. There is a mountain of division between them and heaven. They have yet to "pass from death to life." (1 John 3:14.) Oh, that they did but see and know their danger! Alas, it is one fearful mark of spiritual death, that, like natural death—it is not felt! We lay our beloved ones tenderly and gently in their narrow beds—but they feel nothing of what we do. "The dead," says the wise man, "know nothing." (Eccl. 9:5.) And this is just the case with *dead souls.*

See, too, what reason ministers have to be anxious about their congregations. We feel that time is short, and life uncertain. We know that death spiritual is the high road that leads to death eternal. We fear lest any of our hearers should die in their sins, unprepared, unrenewed, impenitent, unchanged. Oh, marvel not if we often speak strongly and plead with you warmly! We dare not give you flattering titles, amuse you with trifles, say smooth things, and cry "Peace, peace," when life and death are at stake, and nothing less. The plague is among you. We feel that we stand between the living and the dead. We must and will "use great plainness of speech." "If the trumpet gives an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself for the battle?" (2 Cor. 3:12; 1 Cor. 14:8.)

II. Let me tell you, in the second place, **what every man needs who would be saved.** ***He must be quickened and made spiritually alive.***

Life is the mightiest of all possessions. From death to life is the mightiest of all changes. And no change short of this will ever avail to fit man's soul for heaven. Yes! it is not a little mending and alteration—a little cleansing and purifying—a little painting and patching—a little whitewashing and varnishing—a little turning over a new leaf and putting on a new outside that is needed. It is the bringing in of something altogether new—the planting within us of a new nature, a new being—a new principle—a new mind. This alone, and nothing less than this, will ever meet the necessities of man's soul. We need not merely a new skin—but a new heart.

"It is not a little reforming will save the man, no, nor all the morality in the world, nor all the common graces of God's spirit, nor the outward change of the life; they will not do, unless we are quickened, and have a new life wrought in us."—*Usher's Sermons.*

To hew a block of marble from the quarry—and carve it into a noble statue; to break up a waste wilderness—and turn it into a garden of flowers; to melt a lump of ironstone—and forgo it into watch-springs—all these are mighty changes. Yet they all come short of the change which every child of Adam requires, for they are merely the same thing in a new form, and the same substance in a new shape. But man requires the grafting in of that which he had not before. He needs a change as great as a resurrection from the dead—he must become a new creature. "Old things must pass away, and all things must become new." He must be "born again, born from above, born of God." The natural birth is not a whit more necessary to the life of the body, than is the spiritual birth to the life of the soul. (2 Cor. 5:17. John 3:3.)

I know well this is a hard saying. I know the children of this world dislike to hear that they must be born again. It pricks their consciences—it makes them feel they are further off from heaven than they are willing to allow. It seems like a narrow door which they have not yet stooped to enter, and they would gladly make the door wider, or climb in some other way. But I dare not give place by subjection in this matter. I will not foster a delusion, and tell people they only need repent a little, and stir up a gift they have within them, in order to become real Christians. I dare not use any other language than that of the Bible; and I say, in the words which are written for our learning, "We all need to be born again—we are all naturally dead, and must be made alive."

If we had seen Manasseh, King of Judah, at one time filling Jerusalem with idols, and murdering his children in honor of false gods—and then at another time purifying the temple, putting down idolatry, and living a godly life; if we had seen Zacchaeus the publican of Jericho, at one time cheating, plundering, and covetous—at another following Christ, and giving half his goods to the poor; if we had seen the servants of Nero's household, at one time conforming to their master's profligate ways—at another of one heart and mind with the Apostle Paul; if we had seen the ancient father Augustine, at one time living in fornication—at another walking closely with God; if we had seen our own Reformer Latimer, at one time preaching earnestly against the truth as it is in Jesus—at another spending and being spent even to death in Christ's cause; if we had seen the New Zealanders, or Tinnevelly Hindus, at one time blood-thirsty, immoral, or sunk in abominable superstitions—at another holy, pure, and believing Christians; if we had seen these wonderful changes, or any of them, I ask any sensible Christian what we would have said? Would we have been content to call them nothing more than amendments and alterations? would we have been satisfied with saying that Augustine had "reformed his ways," and that Latimer had "turned over a new leaf"? Verily if we said no more than this, the very stones would cry out. I say in all these cases there was nothing less than a new birth, a resurrection of human nature, a quickening of the dead. These are the right words to use. All other language is weak, poor, beggarly, unscriptural, and short of the truth.

Now I will not shrink from saying plainly, we all need the same kind of change, if we are to be saved. The difference between us and any of those I have just named is far less than it appears. Take off the outward crust, and you will find the same nature beneath, in us and them—an evil nature, requiring a complete change. The face of the earth is very different in different climates—but the heart of the earth, I believe, is everywhere the same. Go where you will, from one end to the other, you would always find the granite, or other primitive rocks, beneath your feet, if you only bored down deep enough. And it is just the same with men's hearts. Their customs and their colors, their ways and their laws, may all be utterly unlike; but the inner man is always the same. Their hearts are all alike at the bottom—all stony, all hard, all ungodly, all needing to be thoroughly renewed. The Englishman and the New Zealander stand on the same level in this matter. Both are naturally dead, and both need to be made alive. Both are children of the same father Adam who fell by sin, and both need to be "born again," and made children of God.

Whatever part of the globe we live in, our **eyes** need to be opened—naturally we never see our sinfulness, guilt, and danger. Whatever nation we belong to our **understandings** need to be enlightened—naturally we know little or nothing of the plan of salvation—like the Babel-builders, we think to get to heaven our own way. Whatever church we may belong to, our **wills** need to be bent in the right direction—naturally we would never choose the things which are for our peace; we would never come to Christ. Whatever be our rank in life, our affections need to be turned to things above—naturally we only set them on things below, earthly, sensual, short-lived, and vain. Pride must give place to humility—self-righteousness to self-abasement—carelessness to seriousness—worldliness to holiness—unbelief to faith. Satan's dominion must be put down within us, and the kingdom of God set up. Self must be crucified, and Christ must reign. Until these things come to pass, we are dead as stones. When these things begin to take place, and not until then, we are spiritually alive.

"Man's understanding is so darkened that he can see nothing of God in God, nothing of holiness in holiness, nothing of good in good, nothing of evil in evil, nor anything of sinfulness in sin. Nay, it is so darkened that he fancies himself to see good in evil, and evil in good, happiness in sin, and misery in holiness."—*Berridge*

I dare say this sounds like foolishness to some. But many a living man could stand up this day and testify that it is true. Many an one could tell us that he knows it all by experience, and that he does indeed feel himself a new man. He loves the things that once he hated, and hates the things that once he loved. He has new habits, new companions, new ways, new tastes, new feelings, new opinions, new sorrows, new joys, new anxieties, new pleasures, new hopes, and new fears. In short, the whole bias and current of his being is changed. Ask his nearest relations and friends, and they would bear witness to it. Whether they liked it or not, they would be obliged to confess he was no longer the same.

"How wonderfully does the new born soul differ from his former self. He lives a new life, he walks in a new way, he steers his course

by a new compass, and towards a new coast. His principle is new, his pattern is new, his practices are new, his projects are new, all is new. He ravels out all he had wove before, and employs himself wholly about another work."—*George Swinnocke*. 1660.

Many a one could tell you that once he did not think himself such a very great transgressor. At any rate he fancied he was no worse than others. Now he would say with the apostle Paul, he feels himself the "chief of sinners." (1 Tim. 1. 15.)

"I cannot pray—but I sin—I cannot hear or preach a sermon—but I sin—I cannot give an alms, or receive the sacrament—but I sin—nay, I cannot so much as confess my sins—but my confessions are still aggravations of them. My repentance needs to be repented of, my tears want washing, and the very washing of my tears needs still to be washed over again with the blood of my Redeemer."—*Beveridge*.

"Woe is me, that man should think there is anything in me! He is my witness, before whom I am as crystal, that the secret house-devils, that bear me too often company, that the corruption which I find within, make me go with low sails."—*Rutherford's Letters*. 1637.

Once he did not consider he had a bad heart. He might have his faults, and be led away by bad company and temptations—but 'he had a good heart at the bottom'. Now he would tell you, he knows no heart so bad as his own. He finds it "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." (Jer. 17:6.)

Once he did not suppose it was a very hard matter to get to heaven. He thought he had only to repent, and say a few prayers, and do what he could, and Christ would make up what was lacking. Now he believes the way is narrow, and few find it. He is convinced he could never have made his own peace with God. He is persuaded that nothing but the blood of Christ could wash away his sins. His only hope is to be "justified by faith without the deeds of the law." (Rom. 3:28.)

Once he could see no beauty and excellence in the Lord Jesus Christ. He could not understand some ministers speaking so much about Him. Now he would tell you He is the pearl above all price, the chief among ten thousand, his Redeemer, his Advocate, his Priest, his King, his Physician, his Shepherd, his Friend, his All.

Once he thought lightly about sin. He could not see the necessity of being so particular about it. He could not think a man's words, and thoughts, and actions, were of such importance, and required such watchfulness. Now he would tell you sin is the abominable thing which he hates, the sorrow and burden of his life. He longs to be more holy. He can enter thoroughly into Whitefield's desire, "I want to go where I shall neither sin myself, nor see others sin any more."

"I am sick of all I do, and stand astonished that the Redeemer still continues to make use of and bless me. Surely I am more foolish than any man—no one receives so much and does so little."—Whitefield's Letters.

Once he found no pleasure in means of grace. The Bible was neglected. His prayers, if he had any, were a mere form. Sunday was a tiresome day. Sermons were a weariness, and often sent him to sleep. Now all is altered. These things are the food, the comfort, the delight of his soul.

Once he disliked earnest-minded Christians. He shunned them as melancholy, low-spirited, weak people. Now they are the excellent of the earth, of whom he cannot see too much. He is never so happy as he is in their company. He feels if all men and women were saints, it would be heaven upon earth.

Once he cared only for this world, its pleasures, its business, its occupations, its rewards. Now he looks upon it as an empty, unsatisfying place; an inn—a lodging—a training-school for the life to come. His treasure is in heaven. His home is beyond the grave.

I ask once more, what is all this but new life? Such a change as I have described is no vision and fancy. It is a real actual thing, which not a few in this world have known or felt. It is not a picture of my own imagining. It is a true thing which some of us could find at this moment hard by our own doors. But wherever such a change does take place, there you see the thing of which I am now speaking—you see the *dead made alive,* a new creature, a soul born again. "So that if any one is in Christ, that one is a new creature; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." (2 Corinthians 5:17)

I would to God that changes such as this were more common! I would to God there were not such multitudes, of whom we must say even weeping, they know nothing about the matter at all. But, common or not, one thing I say plainly, this is the kind of change we all need. I do not hold that all must have exactly the same experience. I allow most fully that the change is different, in degree, extent, and intensity, in different people. Grace may be weak, and yet true—life may be feeble, and yet real. But I do confidently affirm we must all go through something of this kind, if ever we mean to be saved. Until this sort of change has taken place, there is no life in us at all. We may be living Churchmen—but we are dead Christians.

"If we be still our old selves, no changelings at all, the same man that we came into the world, without mortification of our corruptions, without addition of grace and sanctification, surely we must seek us another Father, we are not yet the sons of God."—Hall, 1652.

"If you have anything less than regeneration, believe me, you can never see heaven. There is no hope of heaven until then—until you are born again."—*Usher's Sermons*.

Take it home, every man or woman that reads this paper, take it home to your own conscience, and look at it well. Some time or other, between the cradle and the grave, all who would be saved must be made alive. The words which good old Berridge had engraved on his tombstone are faithful and true, "Reader! are you born again? Remember! no salvation without a new birth."

See now what an amazing gulf there is between the Christian in name and form—and the Christian in deed and truth. It is not the difference of one being a little better, and the other a little worse than his neighbor—it is the difference between a state of life and a state of death. The smallest blade of grass that grows upon a Highland mountain is a more noble object than the fairest wax flower that was ever formed; for it has that which no science of man can impart—has *life*. The most splendid marble statue in Greece or Italy is nothing by the side of the poor sickly child that crawls over the cottage floor; for with all its beauty it is *dead*. And the weakest

member of the family of Christ is far higher and more precious in God's eyes than the most gifted man of the world. The one lives unto God, and shall live forever—the other, with all his intellect, is still dead in sins.

Oh, you that have passed from death to life, you have reason indeed to be thankful! Remember what you once were by nature—dead. Think what you are now by grace—alive. Look at the dry bones thrown up from the graves. Such were you; and who has made you to differ? Go and fall low before the footstool of your God. Bless Him for His grace, His free distinguishing grace. Say to Him often, "Who am I, Lord, that you have brought me hitherto? Why me? Why have you been merciful unto me?"

III. Let me tell you, in the third place—**in what way alone this quickening can be brought about—by what means a dead soul can be made spiritually alive.**

Surely, if I did not tell you this, it would be cruelty to write what I have written. Surely, it would be leading you into a dreary wilderness, and then leaving you without bread and water. It would be like marching you down to the Red Sea, and then bidding you walk over. It would be commanding you to make brick like Pharaoh, and yet refusing to provide you with straw. It would be like tying your hands and feet, and then desiring you to fight a good warfare, and "so run as to obtain the prize." I will not do so. I will not leave you, until I have pointed out the wicket-gate towards which you must run. By God's help, I will set before you the full provision there is made for dead souls. Listen to me a little longer, and I will once more show you what is written in the Scripture of truth.

One thing is very clear—**we cannot work this mighty change ourselves.** It is not in us. We have no strength or power to do it. We may change our sins—but we cannot change our hearts. We may take up a new way—but not a new nature. We may make considerable reforms and alterations. We may lay aside many outward bad habits, and begin to do many outward duties. But we cannot create a new principle within us. We cannot bring something out of nothing. The Ethiopian cannot change his skin, nor the leopard his spots. No more can we put life into our own souls. (Jerem. 13:23.)

"There is not one good duty which the natural man can do. If it should be said to him, Think but one good thought, and for it you shall go to heaven, he could not think it. Until God raises him from the sink of sin, as He did Lazarus from the grave, he cannot do anything that is well pleasing to God. He may do the works of a moral man—but to do the works of a man quickened and enlightened, is beyond his power."—*Usher's Sermons.*

"Nature can no more cast out nature, than Satan can cast out Satan."—*Thomas Watson,* 1653.

"Nature cannot raise itself to this, any more than a man can give natural being to himself."—*Leighton.*

Another thing is equally clear; no other man can do it for us. Ministers may preach to us, and pray with us—receive us at the font in baptism, admit us at the Lord's Table, and give us the bread and wine—but they cannot bestow spiritual life. They may bring in regularity in the place of disorder, and outward decency in the place of open sin. But they cannot go below the surface. They cannot reach our hearts. Paul may plant and Apollos water—but God alone can give the increase. (1 Cor. 3:6.) Who then can make a dead soul alive? No one can do it but God. He only who breathed into Adam's nostrils the breath of life, can ever make a dead sinner—a living Christian. He only who formed the world out of nothing in the day of creation, can make man a new creature. He only who said, "Let there be light, and there was light," can cause spiritual light to shine into man's heart. He only who formed man out of the dust and gave life to his body can ever give life to his soul. His is the special office to do it by His Spirit, and His also is the power. (Gen. 1:2, 3.)

"To create or bring something out of nothing, is beyond the power of the strongest creature. It is above the strength of all people and angels to create the least blade of grass; God challenges this as His prerogative royal. (Isaiah 40:26.) Augustine said truly, To convert the little world 'man' is more than to create the great world."—*George Swinnocke,* 1660.

The glorious Gospel contains provision for our spiritual, as well as our eternal life. The Lord Jesus is a complete Savior. That mighty living Head has no dead members. His people are not only justified and pardoned—but quickened together with Him, and made partakers of His resurrection. To Him the Spirit joins the sinner, and raises him by that union from death to life. In Him the sinner lives after he has believed. The spring of all his vitality is the union between Christ and his soul, which the Spirit begins and keeps up. Christ is the appointed fountain of all spiritual life, and the Holy Spirit the appointed agent who conveys that life to our souls.

"Then do we begin to live, when we begin to have union with Christ the Fountain of Life, by His Spirit communicated to us—from this time we are to reckon our life."—*Flavel.*

"Christ is an universal principle of all life."—*Sibbes.* 1635.

Come to the Lord Jesus Christ, if you would have life. He will not cast you out. He has gifts, even for the rebellious. The moment the dead man touched the body of Elisha, he revived and stood upon his feet. (2 Kings 13:21.)—The moment you touch the Lord Jesus with the hand of faith, you are alive unto God, as well as forgiven all trespasses. Come, and your soul shall live.

I never despair of anyone becoming a decided Christian, whatever he may have been in days gone by. I know how great the change is from death to life. I know the mountains of division that seem to stand between some of us and heaven. I know the hardness, the prejudices, the desperate sinfulness of the natural heart. But I remember that God the Father made this beautiful and well-ordered world out of nothing. I remember the voice of the Lord Jesus could reach Lazarus when four days dead, and recall him even from the grave. I remember the amazing victories the Spirit of God has won in every nation under heaven. I remember all this, and feel that I never need despair. Yes! those among us who now seem most utterly dead in sins, may yet be raised to a new being, and walk before God in newness of life.

Why should it not be so? The Holy Spirit is a merciful and loving Spirit. He turns away from no man because of his vileness. He passes by no one because his sins are black and scarlet. There was nothing in the Corinthians that He should come down and quicken them. Paul reports of them that they were "fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, homosexuals, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, extortioners." "Such," he says, "were some of you." Yet even them the Spirit made alive. "You are washed," he writes, "you are sanctified, you are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." (1 Cor. 6:9-11.)

There was nothing in the Colossians, that He should visit their hearts. Paul tells us that "they walked in sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry." Yet them also the Spirit quickened. He made them "put off the old man with his deeds, and put on the new man which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him." (Coloss. 3:5-10.)

There was nothing in Mary Magdalene that the Spirit should make her soul alive. Once she had been "possessed with seven devils." There was once a time, if report be true, when she was a woman proverbial for vileness and iniquity. Yet even her the Spirit made a new creature, separated her from her sins, brought her to Christ, made her "last at the cross, and first at the tomb."

Never, never will the Spirit turn away from a soul because of its corruption. He never has done so—He never will. It is His glory that He has purified the minds of the most impure, and made them temples for His own abode. He may yet take the worst of us, and make him a vessel of grace.

Why indeed should it not be so? The Spirit is an Almighty Spirit. He can change the stony heart into a heart of flesh. He can break up and destroy the strongest bad habits, like string in the fire. He can make the most difficult things seem easy, and the mightiest objections melt away like snow in spring. He can cut the bars of brass, and throw the gates of prejudice wide open. He can fill up every valley, and make every rough place smooth. He has done it often, and He can do it again.

"Such is the power of the Holy Spirit to regenerate people, and as it were to bring them forth anew, so that they shall be nothing like the people they were before."

The Spirit can take a Jew—the bitterest enemy of Christianity, the fiercest persecutor of true believers—the strongest stickler for Pharisaical notions, the most prejudiced opposer of Gospel doctrine—and turn that man into an earnest preacher of the very faith he once destroyed. He has done it already. He did it with the Apostle Paul.

The Spirit can take a Roman Catholic monk, brought up in the midst of Romish superstition—trained from his infancy to believe false doctrine, and obey the Pope—steeped to the eyes in error, and make that man the clearest upholder of justification by faith the world ever saw. He has done so already. He did it with Martin Luther.

The Spirit can take an English tinker, without learning, patronage, or money—a man at one time notorious for nothing so much as blasphemy and swearing—and make that man write a pious book, which shall stand unrivaled and unequaled, in its way, by any book since the time of the Apostles. He has done so already. He did it with John Bunyan, the author of "Pilgrim's Progress."

The Spirit can take a sailor drenched in worldliness and sin—a profligate captain of a slave ship, and make that man a most successful minister of the Gospel—a writer of godly letters, which are a storehouse of experimental religion—and of hymns which are known and sung wherever English is spoken. He has done it already. He did it with John Newton.

All this the Spirit has done, and much more, of which I cannot speak particularly. And the arm of the Spirit is not shortened. His power is not decayed. He is like the Lord Jesus, the same yesterday, today, and forever." (Heb. 13:8.) He is still doing wonders, and will do to the very end.

Once more then, I say, I never despair of any man's soul being made alive. I would despair—if it depended on man himself. Some seem so hardened, I would have no hope. I would despair if it depended on the work of ministers. Alas, the very best of us are poor, weak creatures! But I cannot despair when I remember that God the Spirit is the agent who conveys life to the soul—for I know and am persuaded that with Him nothing is impossible.

I would not be surprised to hear, even in this life, that the hardest man in the list of my acquaintances has become softened, and the proudest has taken his place at the feet of Jesus as a weaned child.

I shall not be surprised to meet many on the right hand, in the day of judgment, whom I shall leave, when I die, traveling in the broad way to destruction. I shall be startled, and say, "What! you here!" I shall only remind them, "Was not this my word, when I was yet among you—Nothing is impossible with Him who quickens the dead."

Does anyone of us desire to help the Church of Christ? Then let him pray for a great outpouring of the Spirit. Only the Holy Spirit can give edge to sermons, and point to advice, and power to rebukes, and can cast down the high walls of sinful hearts. It is not better preaching, and finer writing that is needed in this day—but more of the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Does anyone feel the slightest drawing towards God—the smallest concern about his immortal soul? Then flee to that open fountain of living waters, the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall receive the Holy Spirit. (John 7:39.) Begin at once to pray for the Holy Spirit. Think not that you are shut up and cut off from hope. The Holy Spirit is promised to "those who ask Him." (Luke 11:13.) His very name is the Spirit of promise and the Spirit of life. Give Him no rest until He comes down and makes you a new heart. Cry mightily unto the Lord—say unto Him, "Bless me, even me also—quicken me, and make me alive."

And now let me wind up all I have said with a few words of **SPECIAL APPLICATION**. I have shown what I believe to be the truth as it is in Jesus. Let me try, by God's blessing, to bring it home to the hearts and consciences of all into whose hands this volume may fall.

1. First, let me put this question to every soul who reads this paper, "Are you dead, or are you alive?"

Allow me, as an ambassador for Christ, to press the inquiry on every conscience. There are only two **ways** to walk in, the narrow way and the broad way. There are only two **companies** in the day of judgment, those on the right hand, and those on the left. There are only two **classes** of people in the professing Church of Christ, and to one of them you must belong. Where are you? What are you? Are you among the living, or among the dead?

I speak to you yourself, and to none else—not to your neighbor—but to you, not to Africans or New Zealanders—but to you. I do not ask whether you are an angel, or whether you have the mind of David or Paul—but I do ask whether you have a well-founded hope that you are a new creature in Christ Jesus, I do ask whether you have reason to believe you have put off the old man and put on the

new—whether you are conscious of ever having gone through a real spiritual change of heart—whether, in one word, you are dead or alive.

"All hangs upon this hinge. If this be not done, you are undone—undone eternally. All your profession, civility, privileges, gifts, duties, are ciphers, and signify nothing, unless regeneration be the figure put before them. "—*Swinnocke*. 1660.

"Believe me, whatever you are, you shall never be saved for being a Lord or a knight, a gentleman or a rich man, a learned man or a well-spoken, eloquent man; nor yet for being a Calvinist, or a Lutheran, an Arminian, an Anabaptist, a Presbyterian, an Independent, or a Protestant, formally and merely as such; much less for being a Papist, or of any such grossly deluded sect—but as a regenerate Christian it is that you must be saved—or you can have no hope."—*Richard Baxter*. 1659.

(a) Think not to put me off by saying, "you were admitted into the Church by baptism, you received grace and the Spirit in that sacrament, you are alive." It shall not avail you. Paul himself says of the baptized widow who lives in pleasure, "She is *dead* while she lives." (1 Tim. 5:6.) The Lord Jesus Christ Himself tells the chief officer of the Church in Sardis, "You have a name that you live, and are *dead."* (Rev. 3:1.). The life you talk of is nothing if it cannot be seen. Show it to me, if I am to believe its existence. Grace is light, and light will always be discerned. Grace is salt, and salt will always be tasted. An indwelling of the Spirit which does not show itself by outward fruits, and a grace which men's eyes cannot discover, are both to be viewed with the utmost suspicion. Believe me, if you have no other proof of spiritual life but your baptism, you are yet a dead soul.

(b) Think not to tell me "It is a question that cannot be decided, and you call it presumptuous to give an opinion in such a matter." This is a vain refuge, and a false humility. Spiritual life is no such dim and doubtful thing as you seem to fancy. There are marks and evidences by which its presence may be discerned by those who know the Bible. "We know," says John, "that we have passed from death unto life." (1 John 3:14.) The exact time and season of that passage may often be hidden from a man. The fact and reality of it will seldom be entirely an uncertain thing. It was a true and beautiful saying of a Scotch girl, to Whitefield, when asked if her heart was changed, "Something was changed, she knew, it might be the world, it might be her own heart—but there was a great change somewhere, she was quite sure, for everything seemed different to what it once did." Oh, cease to evade the inquiry! "Anoint your eyes with eye-salve that you may see." (Rev. 3:18.) Are you dead or alive?

(c) Think not to reply, "You do not know—you allow it is a matter of importance—you hope to know some time before you die—you mean to give your mind to it when you have a convenient season—but at present you do not know." You do not know! Yet heaven or hell is wrapped up in this question. An eternity of happiness or misery hinges upon your answer. You do not leave your worldly affairs so unsettled. You do not manage your earthly business so loosely. You look far forward. You provide against every possible contingency. You insure life and property. Oh, why not deal in the same way with your immortal soul?

You do not know! Yet all around you is uncertainty. You are a poor frail worm—your body fearfully and wonderfully made—your health liable to be put out of order in a thousand ways. **The next time the daisies bloom, it may be over your grave!** All before you is dark. You know not what a day might bring forth, much less a year. Oh! why not bring your soul's business to a point without delay?

Let every reader of this paper begin the great business of self-examination. Rest not until you know the length and breadth of your own state in God's sight. Backwardness in this matter is an evil sign. It springs from an uneasy conscience. It shows that a man thinks ill of his own case. He feels, like a dishonest tradesman, that his accounts will not bear inquiry. He dreads the light.

In spiritual things, as in everything else, it is the highest wisdom to make sure work. Take nothing for granted. Do not measure your condition by that of others. Bring everything to the measure of God's Word. **A mistake about your soul is a mistake for eternity!** "Surely," says Leighton, "they that are not born again, shall one day wish they had never been born."

Sit down this day and think. Commune with your own heart and be still. Go to your own room and consider. Enter into your own closet, or at any rate contrive to be alone with God. Look the question fairly, fully, honestly in the face. How does it touch you? Are you among the living or among the dead?

"If your state be good, searching into it will give you the comfort of it. If your state be bad, searching into it cannot make it worse; nay, it is the only way to make it better—for conversion begins with conviction."—*Hopkins*. 1680.

2. In the second place, let me speak in all affection to those who are DEAD.

What shall I say to you? What can I say? What words of mine are likely to have any effect on your hearts? This I will say—I mourn over your souls. I do most sincerely mourn. You may be thoughtless and unconcerned. You may care little for what I am saying. You may scarcely run your eye over this paper, and after reading it you may despise it and return to the world; but you cannot prevent my feeling for you, however little you may feel for yourselves.

Do I mourn when I see a young man sapping the foundation of his bodily health by indulging his lusts and passions, sowing bitterness for himself in his old age? Much more then will I mourn over your souls.

Do I mourn when I see people squandering away their inheritance, and wasting their property on trifles and follies? Much more then will I mourn over your souls.

Do I mourn when I hear of one drinking slow poisons, because they are pleasant, as the drunkard or the opium-eater—inch by inch digging his own grave? Much more then will I mourn over your souls.

I mourn to think of golden opportunities thrown away—of Christ rejected, of the blood of atonement trampled under foot—of the Spirit resisted; the Bible neglected—heaven despised, and the world put in the place of God.

I mourn to think of the present happiness you are missing, the peace and consolation you are thrusting from you, the misery you are laying up in store for yourselves—and the bitter waking up which is yet to come!

Yes! I must mourn. I cannot help it. Others may think it enough to mourn over dead bodies. For my part, I think there is far more cause to mourn over dead souls. The children of this world find fault with us sometimes for being so serious and grave. Truly, when I look at the world, I marvel we can ever smile at all.

To everyone who is dead in sins I say this day—Why will you die? Are the wages of sin so sweet and good, that you cannot give them up? Is the world so satisfying that you cannot forsake it? Is the service of Satan so pleasant that you and he are never to be parted? Is heaven so poor a thing that it is not worth seeking? Is your soul of so little consequence, that it is not worth a struggle to have it saved? Oh, turn! turn before it be too late! God is not willing that you should perish. "As I live," He says, "I have no pleasure in the death of him who dies." Jesus loves you, and grieves to see your folly. He wept over wicked Jerusalem, saying, "I would have gathered you—but you would not be gathered." Surely if lost, your blood will be upon your own heads. "Awake, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light." (Ezek. 18"32; Matt. 23:37; Eph. 5:14.)

Believe me, believe me, true repentance is that one step that no man ever repented of. Thousands have said at their latter end, they had "served God too little." But no person ever said, as he left this world, that he had cared for his soul too much. The way of life is a narrow path—but the footsteps in it are all in one direction—not one child of Adam has ever come back and said it was a delusion. The way of the world is a broad way—but millions on millions have forsaken it, and borne their testimony that it was a way of sorrow and disappointment.

3. Let me, in the third place, speak to those who are LIVING.

Are you indeed alive unto God? Can you say with truth, "I was dead, and am alive again. I was blind—but now I see"? Then allow the word of exhortation, and incline your hearts unto wisdom.

Are you alive? Then see that you *prove* it *by your actions*. Be a consistent witness. Let your words, and works, and ways, and tempers all tell the same story. Let not your life be a poor torpid life, like that of a tortoise or a sloth—let it rather be an energetic stirring life, like that of a deer or bird. Let your graces shine forth from all the windows of your life, that those who live near you may see that the Spirit is abiding in your hearts. Let your light not be a dim, flickering, uncertain flame; let it burn steadily, like the eternal fire on the altar, and never become low. Let the savor of your religion, like Mary's precious ointment, fill all the houses where you dwell. Be an epistle of Christ so clearly written, penned in such large bold characters—that he who runs may read it. Let your Christianity be so unmistakable, your eye so single, your heart so whole, your walk so straightforward that all who see you may have no doubt whose you are, and whom you serve. If we are quickened by the Spirit, no one ought to be able to doubt it. Our conversation should declare plainly that we "seek a country." (Heb 11:14.) It ought not to be necessary to tell people, as in the case of a badly painted picture, "This is a Christian." We ought not to be so sluggish and still, that people shall be obliged to come close and look hard, and say, "Is he dead or alive?"

Are you alive? Then see that you *prove* it *by your growth*. Let the great change within become every year more evident. Let your light be an increasing light, not like Joshua's sun in the valley of Ajalon, standing still—nor like Hezekiah's sun, going backwards—but ever shining more and more to the very end of your days. Let the image of your Lord, wherein you are renewed, grow clearer and sharper every month. Let it not be like the image and superscription on a coin, more indistinct and defaced the longer it is used. Let it rather become more plain the older it is, and let the likeness of your King stand out more fully and sharply.

I have no confidence in a standing-still religion. I do not think a Christian was meant to be like an animal, to grow to a certain age, and then stop growing. I believe rather he was meant to be like a tree, and to increase more and more in strength and vigor all his days. Remember the words of the Apostle Peter, *"Add* to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity." (2 Peter 1:5, 6, 7.) This is the way to be a useful Christian. People will believe you are in earnest when they see constant improvement, and perhaps be drawn to go with you. This is one way to obtain comfortable assurance. "So an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly." (2 Peter 1:11.) Oh, as ever you would be useful and happy in your religion, let your motto be, "Forward, forward!" to your very last day.

"People observe *actions,* a great deal more than *words*."—*Leighton*.

I entreat all believing readers to remember that I speak to myself as well as to them. I say the spiritual life there is in Christians ought to be more evident. Our lamps need trimming—they ought not to burn so dim. Our separation from the world should be more distinct—our walk with God more decided. Too many of us are like Lot—lingerers; or like Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh—borderers; or like the Jews in Ezra's time—so mixed up with strangers, that our spiritual pedigree cannot be made out. It ought not so to be. Let us be up and doing. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. If we really have life, let us make it known.

The state of the world demands it. The latter days have fallen upon us. The kingdoms of the earth are shaking, falling, crashing, and crumbling away. (Isaiah 24:1, etc.) The glorious kingdom that will never be removed is drawing near. The King Himself is close at hand. The children of this world are looking round to see what the saints are doing. God, in His wonderful providences, is calling to us, "Who is on my side? Who?"—Surely we ought to be, like Abraham, very ready with our answer, "Here am I!" (Gen. 22:1.)

"Ah!" you may say, "These are ancient things—these are brave words. We know it all. But we are weak, we have no power to think a good thought, we can do nothing, we must sit still." Hearken, my believing reader. What is the cause of your weakness? Is it not because the fountain of life is little used? Is it not because you are resting on old experiences, and not daily gathering new manna—daily drawing new strength from Christ? He has left you the promise of the Comforter. "He gives more grace"—grace upon grace to all who ask it. He came "that you might have life, and have it more abundantly." "Open your mouths wide," He says this day, "and they shall be filled." (James 4:6; John 10:10; Ps. 81:10.)

I say to all believers who read this paper, if you want your spiritual life to be more healthy and vigorous, you must just come more boldly to the throne of grace. You must give up this hanging-back spirit—this hesitation about taking the Lord at His own word. Doubtless you are poor sinners, and nothing at all. The Lord knows it, and has provided a store of strength for you. But you do not draw upon the store He has provided—you have not, because you ask not. The secret of your weakness is your little faith—and little prayer. The fountain is unsealed—but you only sip a few drops. The bread of life is before you—yet you only eat a few crumbs. The treasury of heaven is open—but you only take a few pennies. "O you of little faith, why do you doubt?" (Matt. 14:31.)

Awake to know your privileges—awake, and sleep no longer. Tell me not of spiritual hunger, and thirst, and poverty—so long as the throne of grace is before you. Say rather, that you are proud—and will not come to it as poor sinners. Say rather, you are slothful—and will not take pains to get more.

Cast aside the grave-clothes of pride—which still hang around you. Throw off that Egyptian garment of indolence—which ought not to have been brought through the Red Sea. Away with that unbelief, which ties and paralyzes your tongue. You are not straitened in God—but in yourselves. "Come boldly to the throne of grace," where the Father is ever waiting to give, and Jesus ever sits by Him to intercede. (Heb. 4:16.) Come boldly, for you may, all sinful as you are—if you come in the name of the Great High Priest. Come boldly, and ask largely, and you shall have abundant answers—mercy like a river, and grace and strength like a mighty stream. Come boldly, and you shall have supplies exceeding all you can ask or think. "Hitherto you have asked nothing. Ask and receive, that your joy may be full." (John 16:24.)

If we really are *alive and not dead,* let us strive so to carry ourselves that people may know whose we are. While we live, may we live unto the Lord. When we die, may we die the death of the righteous. And when the Lord Jesus comes, may we be found ready, and "not be ashamed before Him at His coming." (1 John 2:28.)

But, after all, are we alive or dead? That is the great question!

THE HEART

by J. C. Ryle

"Give me your heart." Proverbs 23:26

"Your heart is not right in the sight of God." Acts 8:21

The heart is the main thing in true religion. I make no excuse for asking the special attention of my readers, while I try to say a few things about the heart.

The **head** is not the principal thing. You may know the whole truth as it is in Jesus, and consent that it is good. You may be clear, correct, and sound in your religious opinions. But all this time you may be walking in the broad way which leads to destruction. It is your heart which is the main point. "Is your heart right in the sight of God?"

Your **outward life** may be moral, decent, respectable, in the eyes of people. Your minister, and friends, and neighbors, may see nothing very wrong in your general conduct. But all this time you may be hanging on the brink of everlasting ruin. It is your heart which is the main thing. Is that heart right in the sight of God?

Wishes and **desires** are not enough to make a Christian. You may have many good feelings about your soul. You may, like Balaam, long to "die the death of the righteous." (Num. 23:10.) You may sometimes tremble at the thought of judgment to come, or be melted to tears by the tidings of Christ's love. But all this time you may be slowly drifting downward into hell. It is your heart which is the main thing. Is that heart right in the sight of God?

There are three things which I propose to do in order to impress the subject of this paper upon your mind.

I. First, I will show you the immense **importance** of the heart in religion.

II. Secondly, I will show you the heart which is **wrong** in the sight of God.

III. Lastly, I will show you the heart which is **right** in the sight of God.

May God bless the whole subject to the soul of everyone into whose hands this book may fall! May the Holy Spirit, without whom all preaching and writing can do nothing, apply this paper to many consciences, and make it an arrow to pierce many hearts!

I. In the first place, I will show **the immense IMPORTANCE of the heart in religion.**

How shall I prove this point? From whence shall I fetch my arguments? I must turn to the Word of God. In questions of this kind it matters nothing what the world thinks right or wrong. There is only one sure test of truth. What says the Scripture? What is written in the Bible? What is the mind of the Holy Spirit? If we cannot submit our judgments to this infallible umpire, it is useless to pretend that we have any religion at all.

For one thing, the Bible teaches that **the heart is that part of us on which the state of our soul depends**. "Out of it are the issues of life." (Prov. 4:23.) The reason, the understanding, the conscience, the affections, are all second in importance to the heart. The heart is the man. It is the seat of all spiritual life, and health, and strength, and growth. It is the hinge and turning-point in the condition of man's soul. If the heart is alive to God and quickened by the Spirit, the man is a living Christian. If the heart is dead and has not the Spirit, the man is dead before God. **The heart is the man!** Tell me not merely what a man says and professes, and where a man goes on Sunday, and what money he puts in the collecting plate. Tell me rather what his heart is, and I will tell you what he is. "As a man thinks in his heart, so is he." (Prov. 23:7.)

For another thing, the Bible teaches that **the heart is that part of us at which God especially looks**. "Man looks at the outward appearance—but the Lord looks on the heart." (1 Sam. 16:7.) "Every way of man is right in his own eyes—but the Lord ponders the

heart." (Proverbs 21:2.) Man is naturally content with the outward part of religion, with outward morality, outward correctness, outward regular attendance on means of grace. But the eyes of the Lord look much further. He regards our motives. He "weighs the spirits." (Prov. 16:2.) He says Himself, "I the Lord am the searcher of the heart, the tester of the thoughts." (Jer. 17:10.)

For another thing, the Bible teaches that **the heart is the first and foremost thing which God asks man to give him**. "My son," He says, "give Me your heart." (Prov., 23:26.) We may give God a bowed head and a serious face, our bodily presence in His house, and a loud amen. But until we give God our hearts, we give Him nothing of any value. The sacrifices of the Jews in Isaiah's time were many and costly. They drew near to God with their mouth, and honored Him with their lips. But they were all wholly useless, because the heart of the worshipers was far from God. (Matt. 15:8.) The zeal of Jehu against idolatry was very great, and his services in pulling down idols brought him many temporal rewards. But there was one great blot on his character which spoiled all. He did not walk in the law of God "with all his heart." (2 Kings 10:31.) The heart is what the husband desires to have in his wife, the parent in his child, and the master in his servant. And the heart is what God desires to have in professing Christians.

What is the heart in man's body? It is the principal and most important organ in the whole frame. A man may live many years in spite of fevers, wounds, and loss of limbs. But a man cannot live if you injure his heart. Just so it is with the heart in religion. It is the fountain of life to the soul.

What is the root to the tree? It is the source of all life, and growth, and fruitfulness. You may cut off the branches, and wound the trunk, and the tree may yet survive. But if you hurt the root, the tree will die. Just so it is with the heart in religion. It is the root of life to the soul.

What is the mainspring to the watch? It is the cause of all its movements, and the secret of all its usefulness. The case may be costly and beautiful. The face and figures may be skillfully made. But if there is anything wrong with the mainspring the works will not go. Just so it is with the heart in religion. It is the mainspring of life to the soul.

What is the furnace to the steam engine? It is the cause of all its motion and power. The machinery may be properly made. Every screw, and valve, and joint, and crank, and rod may be in its right place. But if the furnace is cold and the water is not turned into steam, the engine will do nothing. Just so is it with the heart in religion. Unless the heart is lighted with fire from on high, the soul will not move.

Would you know the reason why such multitudes around you take no interest in true religion? They have no real concern about God, or Christ, or the Bible, or heaven, or hell, or judgment, or eternity. They care for nothing but what they shall eat, or what they shall drink, or what they shall put on, or what money they can get, or what pleasure they can have. It is their heart which is in fault! They have not the least appetite for the things of God. They are destitute of any taste or inclination for spiritual things. They need a new mainspring. They need a new heart. "Therefore is there a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, seeing he has no heart unto it." (Prov. 17:16.)

Would you know the reason why so many hear the Gospel year after year, and yet remain unmoved by it? Their minds seem like Bunyan's "slough of despond." Cartloads of good instruction are poured into them without producing any good effect. Their reason is convinced. Their head assents to the truth. Their conscience is sometimes pricked. Their feelings are sometimes roused. Why then do they stick fast? Why do they tarry? It is their hearts which are in fault! Some secret idol chains them down to the earth, and keeps them tied hand and foot, so that they cannot move. They need a new heart. Their picture is drawn faithfully by Ezekiel, "They sit before you as my people, and they hear your words—but they will not do them—for with their mouth they show much love—but their heart goes after their covetousness." (Ezek. 33:31.)

Would you know the reason why thousands of so-called Christians will be lost at last, and perish miserably in hell? They will not be able to say that God did not offer salvation to them. They will not be able to plead that Christ did not send them invitations. Oh no! They will be obliged to confess that "all things were ready" for them, except their own hearts. Their own hearts will prove to have been the cause of their ruin! The life-boat was alongside the wreck—but they would not enter it. Christ "would" have gathered them—but they "would not" be gathered. (Matt. 23:37.) Christ would have saved them—but they would not be saved. "They loved darkness more than light." Their hearts were in fault. "They would not come to Christ, that they might have life." (John 3:19; 5:40.)

I leave this branch of my subject. I trust I have said enough to show you the immense importance of the heart in religion. Surely I have good reason for pressing the subject of this paper on your notice. Is your heart right? Is it right in the sight of God?

II. I will now show you, in the second place, **the heart that is WRONG in the sight of God.** There are only two sorts of hearts, a right one and a wrong one. What is a wrong heart like?

The wrong heart is the natural heart with which we are all born. There are no hearts which are right by nature. There are no such things as naturally "good hearts," whatever some ignorant people may please to say about "having a good heart at the bottom." Ever since Adam and Eve fell, and sin entered into the world, men and women are born with an inclination to evil. Every natural heart is wrong. If your heart has never been changed by the Holy Spirit since you were born, know this day, that your heart is wrong.

What does the Scripture say about the natural heart? It says many things which are deeply solemn, and painfully true. It says that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." (Jer. 17:9.) It says that "every imagination of the thoughts of the heart is only evil continually." (Gen. 6:5.) It says that "the heart of the sons of men is full of evil." (Eccles. 9:3.) It says that "From within, out of the heart of man," as out of a fountain, "proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within." (Mark 7:21.) Truly this is a humbling picture! The seeds of these things are in the heart of everyone born into the world. Surely I may well tell you that the natural heart is wrong.

But is there no one common mark of the wrong heart, which is to be seen in all whom God has not changed? Yes! there is; and to that common mark of the wrong heart I now request your attention. There is a most striking and instructive figure of speech, which the Holy Spirit has thought fit to use, in describing the natural hear. He calls it a "stony heart." (Ezek. 11:19.) I know no emblem in the Bible so full of instruction, and so apt and fitting as this one. A truer word was never written than that which calls the natural

heart a heart of stone. Mark well what I am going to say; and may the Lord give you understanding!

(a) A stone is **HARD**. All people know that. It is unyielding, unbending, unimpressible. It may be broken—but it will never bend. The proverb is world-wide, "as hard as a stone." Look at the granite rocks which line the coast of Cornwall. For four thousand years the waves of the Atlantic Ocean have dashed against them in vain. There they stand in their old hardness, unbroken and unmoved. It is just the same with the natural heart. Afflictions, mercies, losses, crosses, sermons, counsels, books, tracts, speaking, writing—all, all are unable to soften it. Until the day that God comes down to change it, it remains unmoved. Well may the natural heart be called a heart of stone!

(b) A stone is **COLD**. There is a chilly, icy feeling about it, which you know the moment you touch it. It is utterly unlike the feeling of flesh, or wood, or even earth. The proverb is in everyone's mouth, "As cold as a stone." The old marble statues in many a cathedral church have heard the substance of thousands of sermons. Yet they never show any feeling. Not a muscle of their marble faces ever shrinks or moves. It is just the same with the natural heart. It is utterly destitute of spiritual feeling. It cares less for the story of Christ's death on the cross, than it does for the last new novel, or the last debate in Parliament, or the account of a railway accident, or a shipwreck, or an execution. Until God sends fire from heaven to warm it, the natural heart of man has no feeling about religion. Well may it be called a heart of stone!

(c) A stone is **BARREN**. You will reap no harvest off rocks of any description. You will never fill your barns with grain from the top of Snowdon or Ben Nevis. You will never reap wheat on granite, or slate, or on flint. You may get good crops on Norfolk sands, or Cambridgeshire fens, or Suffolk clay, by patience, labor, money, and good farming. But you will never get a crop worth a farthing off a stone. It is just the same with the natural heart. It is utterly barren of penitence, or faith, or love, or fear, or holiness, or humility. Until God breaks it up, and puts a new principle in it, it bears no fruit to God's praise. Well may the natural heart be called a heart of stone!

(d) A stone is **DEAD**. It neither sees, nor hears, nor moves, nor grows. Show it the glories of heaven, and it would not be pleased. Tell it of the fires of hell, and it would not be alarmed. Bid it flee from a roaring lion, or an earthquake, and it would not stir. The Bass Rock and Mount Blanc are just what they were 4000 years ago. They have seen kingdoms rise and fall, and they remain utterly unchanged. They are neither higher, nor broader, nor larger than they were when Noah left the ark. It is just the same with the natural heart. It has not a spark of spiritual life about it. Until God plants the Holy Spirit in it, it is dead and motionless about real religion. Well may the natural heart be called a heart of stone!

The wrong heart is now set before you. Look at it. Think about it. Examine yourself by the light of the picture I have drawn. Perhaps your heart has never yet been changed. Perhaps your heart is still just as it was when you were born. If so, remember this day what I tell you. Your heart is wrong in the sight of God!

Would you know the reason why it is so difficult to do good in the world? Would you know why so few believe the Gospel, and live like true Christians? The reason is, the hardness of man's natural heart. He neither sees nor knows what is for his good. The wonder, to my mind, is not so much that few are converted, as the miraculous fact that any are converted at all. I am not greatly surprised when I see or hear of unbelief. I remember the natural heart is wrong.

Would you know the reason why the state of people is so desperately helpless, if they die in their sins? Would you know why ministers feel so fearful about everyone who is cut off unprepared to meet God? The reason is, the hardness of man's natural heart. What would a man do in heaven, if he got there, with his heart unchanged? By which of the saints would he sit down? What pleasure could he take in God's presence and company? Oh no! it is vain to conceal it. There can be no real hope about a man's condition, if he dies with his heart wrong.

I leave this point here. Once more I press the whole subject of my paper upon your conscience. Surely you must allow it is a very serious one. Is your heart right? Is it right in the sight of God?

III. I will now show you, in the last place, **the right heart.** It is a heart of which the Bible contains many pictures. I am going to try to place some of those pictures before you. On a question like this, I want you to observe what God says, rather than what is said by man. Come, now, and see the marks and signs of a right heart.

(a) The right heart is a "**NEW heart**." (Ezek. 36:26.) It is not the heart with which a man is born—but another heart put in him by the Holy Spirit. It is a heart which has new tastes, new joys, new sorrows, new desires, new hopes, new fears, new likes, new dislikes. It has new views about the soul, and sin, and God, and Christ, and salvation, and the Bible, and prayer, and heaven, and hell, and the world, and holiness. It is like a farm with a new and good tenant. "Old things are passed away. Behold all things are become new." (2 Cor. 5:17.)

(b) The right heart is a "**BROKEN and CONTRITE heart**." (Psalm 51:17.) It is broken off from pride, self-conceit, and self-righteousness. Its former high thoughts of self are cracked, shattered, and shivered to atoms. It thinks itself guilty, unworthy, and corrupt. Its former stubbornness, heaviness, and insensibility have thawed, disappeared, and passed away. It no longer thinks lightly of offending God. It is tender, sensitive, and jealously fearful of running into sin. (2 Kings 22:19.) It is humble, lowly, and self-abased, and sees in itself no good thing.

(c) A right heart is a heart which **BELIEVES on Christ alone for salvation, and in which Christ dwells by faith**. (Rom. 10:10; Eph. 3:17.) It rests all its hopes of pardon and eternal life on Christ's atonement, Christ's mediation, and Christ's intercession. It is sprinkled in Christ's blood from an evil conscience. (Heb. 10:22.) It turns to Christ as the compass-needle turns to the north. It looks to Christ for daily peace, mercy, and grace—as the sun-flower looks to the sun. It feeds on Christ for its daily sustenance, as Israel fed on the manna in the wilderness. It sees in Christ a special fitness to supply all its needs and requirements. It leans on Him, hangs on Him, builds on Him, cleaves to Him, as its physician, guardian, husband, and friend.

(d) A right heart is a **PURIFIED** heart. (Acts 15:9; Matt. 5:8) It loves holiness, and hates sin. It strives daily to cleanse itself from all filthiness of flesh and spirit. (2 Cor. 7:1.) It abhors that which is evil, and cleaves to that which is good. It delights in the law of God, and has that law engraved on it, that it may not forget it. (Psalm 119:11.) It longs to keep the law more perfectly, and takes pleasure in

those who love the law. It loves God and man. Its affections are set on things above. It never feels so light and happy as when it is most holy; and it looks forward to heaven with joy, as the place where perfect holiness will at length be attained.

(e) A right heart is a **PRAYING** heart. It has within it "the Spirit of adoption whereby we cry, Abba Father." (Rom. 8:15.) Its daily feeling is, "Your face, Lord, will I seek." (Psalm 27:8.) It is drawn by an habitual inclination to speak to God about spiritual things—weakly, feebly, and imperfectly perhaps—but speak it must. It finds it necessary to pour out itself before God, as before a friend, and to spread before Him all its needs and desires. It tells Him all its secrets. It keeps back nothing from Him. You might as well try to persuade a man to live without breathing, as to persuade the possessor of a right heart to live without praying.

(f) A right heart is a heart that feels within a **CONFLICT**. (Gal. 5:17.) It finds within itself two opposing principles contending for the mastery—the flesh lusting against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh. It knows by experience what Paul means when he says, "I see a law in my members warring against the law of my mind." (Rom. 7:23.) The wrong heart knows nothing of this strife. The strong man armed keeps the wrong heart as his palace, and his goods are at peace. (Luke 11:21.) But when the rightful King takes possession of the heart, a struggle begins which never ends until death. The right heart may be known by its warfare, quite as much as by its peace.

(g) Last—but not least, the right heart is **HONEST**, and **SINGLE**, and **TRUE**. (Luke 8:15;1 Chron. 12:33; Heb. 10:22.) There is nothing about it of falsehood, hypocrisy, or image-acting. It is not double or divided. It really is what it professes to be, feels what it professes to feel, and believes what it professes to believe. Its faith may be feeble. Its obedience may be very imperfect. But one thing will always distinguish the right heart. Its religion will be real, genuine, thorough, and sincere.

A heart such as that which I have now described, has always been the possession of all true Christians of every name, and nation, and people and tongue. They have differed from one another on many subjects—but they have all been of a "right heart." They have some of them fallen, for a season, like David and Peter—but their hearts have never entirely departed from the Lord. They have often proved themselves to be men and women laden with infirmities—but their hearts have been right in the sight of God. They have understood one another on earth. They have found that their experience was everywhere one and the same. They will understand each other even better in the world to come. All that have had "right hearts" upon earth, will find that they have one heart when they enter heaven.

CONCLUSION

(1) I wish now in conclusion to offer to every reader of this paper, a **QUESTION** to promote self inquiry. I ask you plainly this day, "What is your heart? Is your heart right or wrong?"

I know not who you are into whose hands this paper have fallen. But I do know that self-examination cannot do you any harm. If your heart is right, it will be a comfort to know it. "If our heart condemns us not, then have we confidence towards God." (1 John 3:21.) But if your heart is wrong, it is high time to find it out, and seek a change. The time is short. The night comes when no man can work. Say to yourself this very day, "Is my heart right or wrong?"

Think not to say within yourself, "There is no need for such questions as these. There is no need to make such ado about the heart. I go to church or chapel regularly. I live a respectable life. I hope I shall prove right at last." Beware of such thoughts, I beseech you—beware of them if you would ever be saved. You may go to the best church on earth, and hear the best of preachers. You may be the best of churchmen, or the soundest member of a chapel. But all this time, if your heart is not right in the sight of God, you are on the high road to destruction. Settle down to quiet consideration of the question before you. Look it manfully in the face, and do not turn aside. Is your heart right or wrong?

Think not to say within yourself, "No one can know what his heart is. We must hope the best. No one can find out with any certainty the state of his own soul." Beware, I say again—beware of such thoughts. The thing can be known. The thing can be found out. Deal honestly and fairly with yourself. Set up a 'trial' on the state of your inward man. Summon a jury. Let the Bible preside as judge. Bring up the witnesses. Inquire what your tastes are—where your affections are placed—where your treasure is—what you hate most—what you love most—what pleases you most—what grieves you most. Inquire into all those points impartially, and mark what the answers are. "Where your treasure is there will your heart be also." (Matt. 6:21.) A tree may always be known by its fruit, and a true Christian may always be discovered by his habits, tastes, and affections. Yes! you may soon find out what your heart is, if you are honest, sincere, and impartial. Is it right or wrong?

Think not to say within yourself, "I quite approve of all you say, and hope to examine the state of my heart some day. But I have no time just at present. I cannot find leisure. I wait for a convenient season." Oh, beware of such thoughts—again I say beware! Life is uncertain, and yet you talk of "a convenient season." (Acts 24:25.) Eternity is close at hand, and yet you talk of putting off preparation to meet God. Alas, that habit of putting off is the everlasting ruin of millions of souls! Wretched man that you are! Who shall deliver you from this devil of putting off? Awake to a sense of duty. Throw off the chains that pride, and laziness, and love of the world are weaving round you. Arise and stand upon your feet, and look steadily at the question before you. Churchman or dissenter, I ask you this day—Is your heart right or wrong?

(2) I wish, in the next place, to offer a **SOLEMN WARNING** to all who know their hearts are wrong—but have no desire to change. I do it with every feeling of kindness and affection. I have no wish to excite needless fears. But I know not how to exaggerate the danger of your condition. I warn you that if your heart is wrong in the sight of God, you are hanging over the brink of hell! There is but a step between you and everlasting death!

Can you really suppose that any man or woman will ever enter heaven without a right heart? Do you flatter yourself that any unconverted person will ever be saved? Away with such a miserable delusion! Cast it from you at once and forever. What says the Scripture? "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." "Except you be converted and become as little children, you shall never see the kingdom of heaven." "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." (John 3:3; Matt. 18:3; Heb. 12:14.) It is not enough to have our sins pardoned, as many seem to suppose. There is another thing needed as well as a pardon, and that thing is a new heart. We must have the Holy Spirit to renew us, as well as Christ's blood to wash us. Both renewing and washing are needful before anyone can be saved.

Can you suppose for a moment, that you would be happy in heaven, if you entered heaven without a right heart? Away with the miserable delusion! Cast it from you at once and forever! You must have a "fitness for the inheritance of the saints," before you can enjoy it. (Coloss. 1:12.) Your tastes must be tuned and brought into harmony with those of saints and angels, before you can delight in their company. A sheep is not happy when it is thrown into the water. A fish is not happy when it is cast on dry land. And men and women would not be happy in heaven, if they entered heaven without right hearts.

My warning is before you. Harden not your heart against it. Believe it. Act upon it. Turn it to account. Awake and arise to newness of life without delay. One thing is very certain. Whether you hear the warning or not, God will not go back from what He has said. "If we believe not, He abides faithful—He cannot deny Himself." (2 Tim. 2:13.)

(3) I wish, thirdly, to offer **COUNSEL** to all who know their hearts are wrong—but desire to have them made right. That counsel is short and simple. I advise you to apply at once to the Lord Jesus Christ, and ask for the gift of the Holy Spirit. Entreat Him, as a lost and ruined sinner, to receive you, and supply the needs of your soul. I know well that you cannot make your own heart right. But I know that the Lord Jesus Christ can. And to the Lord Jesus Christ I entreat you to apply without delay.

If any reader of this paper really wants a right heart, I thank God that I can give him good encouragement. I thank God that I can lift up Christ before you, and say boldly, Look at Christ—Seek Christ—Go to Christ. For what did that blessed Lord Jesus come into the world? For what did He give His precious body to be crucified? For what did He die and rise again? For what did He ascend up into heaven, and sit down at the right hand of God? For what did Christ do all this—but to provide complete salvation for poor sinners like you and me—salvation from the guilt of sin, and salvation from the power of sin, for all who believe! Oh, yes! Christ is no half Savior. He has "received gifts for men, even for the rebellious." (Psalm 68:18.) He waits to pour out the Spirit on all who will come to Him. Mercy and grace—pardon and a new heart, all this Jesus is ready to apply to you by His Spirit, if you will only come to Him. Then come—come without delay to Christ.

What is there that Christ cannot do? He can create. By Him were all things made at the beginning. He called the whole world into being by His command. He can quicken. He raised the dead when He was on earth, and gave back life by a word. He can change. He has turned sickness into health, and weakness into strength—famine into plenty, storm into calm, and sorrow into joy. He has wrought thousands of miracles on hearts already. He turned Peter the unlearned fisherman into Peter the Apostle. He turned Matthew the covetous publican into Matthew the Gospel writer. He turned Saul the self-righteous Pharisee into Paul the Evangelist of the world. What Christ has done once, Christ can do again. Christ and the Holy Spirit are always the same. There is nothing in your heart that the Lord Jesus cannot make right. Only come to Christ.

If you had lived in Palestine, in the days when Jesus was upon earth, you would have sought Christ's help if you had been sick. If you had been crushed down by heart-disease in some back lane of Capernaum, or in some cottage by the blue waters of the sea of Galilee, you would surely have gone to Jesus for a cure. You would have sat by the way-side day after day, waiting for His appearing. You would have sought Him, if He did not happen to come near your dwelling—and never rested until you found Him. Oh, why not do the same this very day for the sickness of your soul? Why not apply at once to the Great Physician in heaven, and ask Him to "take away the stony heart and give you a heart of flesh"? (Ezek. 11:19.) Once more I invite you. If you want a "right heart," do not waste time in trying to make it right by your own strength. It is far beyond your power to do it. Come to the great Physician of souls. Come at once to Jesus Christ.

(4) I wish, lastly, to offer an **EXHORTATION** to all whose hearts have been made right in the sight of God. I offer it as a word in season to all true Christians. Hear me, I say to every believing brother or sister. I speak especially to you.

Is your heart right? Then be **thankful**. Praise the Lord for His distinguishing mercy, in "calling you out of darkness into His marvelous light." (1 Pet. 2:9.) Think what you were by nature. Think what has been done for you by free undeserved grace. Your heart may not be all that it ought to be, nor yet all that you hope it will be. But at any rate your heart is not the old hard heart with which you were born. Surely the man whose heart is changed ought to be full of praise.

Is your heart right? Then be **humble** and **watchful**. You are not yet in heaven—but in the world. You are in the body. The devil is near you, and never sleeps. Oh, keep your heart with all diligence! Watch and pray lest you fall into temptation. Ask Christ Himself to keep your heart for you. Ask Him to dwell in it, and reign in it, and garrison it, and to put down every enemy under His feet. Give the keys of the citadel into the King's own hands, and leave them there. It is a weighty saying of Solomon, "He who trusts in his own heart is a fool." (Prov. 28:26.)

Is your heart right? Then be **hopeful** about the hearts of other people. Who has made you to differ? Why should not anyone in the world be changed, when such a one as you has been made a new creature? Work on. Pray on. Speak on. Write on. Labor to do all the good you can to souls. Never despair of anyone being saved so long as he is alive. **Surely the man who has been changed by grace ought to feel that there are no desperate cases. There are no hearts which it is impossible for Christ to cure.**

Is your heart right? Then **do not expect too much from it.** Do not be surprised to find it weak and wayward, faint and unstable, often ready to doubt and fear. Your redemption is not complete until your Lord and Savior comes again. Your full salvation remains yet to be revealed. (Luke 21:28; 1 Pet. 1:5.) You cannot have two heavens—a heaven here and a heaven hereafter. Changed, renewed, converted, sanctified, as your heart is—you must never forget that it is a 'man's heart' after all—and the heart of a man living in the midst of a wicked world.

Finally, let me entreat all right-hearted readers to look onward and forward to the day of Christ's second coming. A time draws near when Satan shall be bound, and Christ's saints shall be changed—when sin shall no more vex us, and the sight of sinners shall no more sadden our minds—when believers shall at length attend on God without distraction, and love Him with a perfect heart. For that day let us wait, and watch, and pray. It cannot be very far off. The night is far spent. The day is at hand. Surely if our hearts are right, we ought often to cry, "Come quickly—come Lord Jesus!

Where Are Your Sins?

By J. C. Ryle

"Make me to know my transgression and my sin." Job 13:23

"Our sins testify against us." Isaiah 59:12

"Cleanse me from my sin." Psalm 51:2.

"The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." 1 John 1:7.

The two words which head this page ought to stir up within us great searchings of heart. They concern every man and woman born into the world. **To know "our sins" is the first letter in the alphabet of saving religion.** To understand our position in the sight of God is one step towards heaven. The true secret of peace of conscience is to feel "our sins" put away. If we love life we ought never to rest until we can give a satisfactory answer to the question, "WHERE ARE MY SINS?"

I ask my readers this day to look this simple question in the face. A time draws near when the question must be answered. The hour comes when all other questions will seem like a drop of water in comparison with this. We shall not say, "Where is my money?"—or, "Where are my lands?"—or, "Where is my property?" Our only thought will be, "My sins! my sins!—Where are my sins?"

I am going to offer a few remarks which may help to throw light on the mighty subject which is before our eyes. My heart's desire and prayer to God is this—that this paper may be useful to the souls of all who read this volume. I entreat you to give it a fair reading. Read it—read it! Read it to the end! Who can tell but the Holy Spirit may employ this paper for the saving of your soul!

I. My first remark is this. **You have many sins.**

I say this boldly, and without the least hesitation. I know not who you are, or how the time past of your life has been spent. But I know, from the Word of God, that every son and daughter of Adam is a great sinner in the sight of God. There is no exception. Sin is the common disease of the whole family of mankind in every quarter of the globe. From the king on his throne—to the beggar by the roadside; from the landlord in his hall—to the laborer in his cottage; from the fine lady in her drawing-room—to the humblest maid-servant in the kitchen; from the clergyman in the pulpit—to the little child in the Sunday school—we are all by nature guilty, guilty, guilty in the sight of God! "In many things we offend all." "There is none righteous—no, not one." "All have sinned." "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." (James 3:2; Rom. 3:10; 5:12; 1 John 1:8.) It is useless to deny it. We have all sinned many sins!

Does anyone doubt the truth of these words? Then go and examine ***the law of God,*** as expounded by the Son of God Himself. Read with attention the fifth chapter of Matthew's Gospel. See how the commandments of God apply to our words as well as to our actions, and to our thoughts and motives, as well as to our words. Know that "the Lord sees not as man sees—man looks at the outward appearance—but the Lord looks at the heart." In His sight the very "thought of foolishness is sin." (1 Sam. 16:7; Prov. 24:9.)

And now turn to the history of ***your own life,*** and try it by the standard of this holy law. Think of the days of your childhood, and all your waywardness, and selfishness, and evil tempers, and perversity, and backwardness to that which is good. Remember the days of your youth, your self-will, your pride, your worldly inclinations, your impatience of control, your longing after forbidden things. Call to mind your conduct since you came to man's estate, and the many departures from the right way, of which you have been guilty every year. Surely, in the face of your life's history, you will not stand up and say, "I have not sinned!"

And then turn to the history of ***your own heart***. Consider how many evil things have gone through it, of which the world knows nothing at all. Remember the thousands of sinful imaginations, and corrupt ideas, which your heart has entertained, even while your outward conduct has been correct, moral, and respectable. Think of the vile thoughts, and deceitful intentions, and false motives, and malicious, envious, spiteful feelings, which have walked up and down in your inward man, while those nearest to you never dreamed or guessed what was going on. Surely, in the face of your heart's history, you will not stand up and say, "I have not sinned!"

Once more I ask every reader of this paper, Do you doubt what I am saying? Do you doubt whether you have sinned many sins? Then go and examine the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew's Gospel. Read the concluding portion of that chapter, which describes the proceedings of the Judgment day. Note carefully the grounds on which the wicked, at the left hand, are condemned to everlasting fire. No mention is made of great open acts of wickedness which they have committed. They are not charged with having murdered, or stolen, or borne false witness, or committed adultery. They are condemned for ***sins of omission!*** The mere fact that they have left undone things which they ought to have done, is sufficient to ruin their souls forever. In short, a man's sins of omission alone are enough to sink him into hell!

And now look at yourself by the light of this wonderful passage of Scripture. Try to remember the countless things you have left undone, which you might have done, and have left unsaid, that you might have said. The acts of self-denying kindness, which you might have performed—but have neglected, how many they are! The good you might have done, and the happiness you might have caused, at very little trouble to yourself—how vast is the amount of it! Surely, in the face of our Lord's teaching about sins of omission, you will not stand up and say, "I have not sinned!"

Once more I ask, Do you doubt the truth of what I am saying? I think it quite possible that you do. As a minister of Christ for more than a quarter of a century, I know something of man's exceeding blindness to his own natural state. Listen to me once more, while I ply your conscience with another argument. Oh, that God may open your eyes, and show you what you are!

Sit down, and take pen and paper, and count up the sins that you have probably sinned since you first knew good from evil. Sit down,

I say, and make a sum. Grant for a moment that there have been on an average, fifteen hours in every twenty-four during which you have been awake, and an active and accountable being. Grant for a moment that in each one of these fifteen hours you have sinned only two sins. Surely you will not say that this is an unfair supposition. Remember we may sin against God in thought, word, or deed. I repeat, it cannot be thought an extreme thing to suppose that in each waking hour of your life you have, in thought, or word, or deed, sinned two sins. And now add up the sins of your life, and see to what sum they will amount.

At the rate of fifteen waking hours in a day, you have sinned every day thirty sins! At the rate of seven days in a week, you have sinned two hundred and ten sins every week! At the rate of four weeks in every month, you have sinned eight hundred and forty sins every month! At the rate of twelve months in every year, you have sinned ten thousand and eighty sins every year! And, in short, not to go further with the calculation, every ten years of you life you have sinned, at the lowest computation, more than ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND SINS!

I invite you to look calmly at this sum. I defy you to disprove its correctness. I ask you, on the contrary, whether I have not entirely understated your case? I appeal to you, as an honest person, whether it be not true, that many an hour, and many a day in your life, you have sinned incessantly? I ask you confidently, whether the sum would not be far more correct if the total number of your sins was multiplied ten-fold? Oh, cease from your self-righteousness! Lay aside this proud facade of "not being so very bad," in which you are trying to wrap yourself up. Be bold enough to confess the truth. Listen not to that old liar, the devil. Surely in the face of that damning sum which I have just cast up, you will not dare to deny that "you have many sins."

I leave this part of my subject here, and pass on. I sadly fear that many a reader will run his eye over what I have been saying, and remain unconvinced and unmoved. I have learned by mournful experience that **the last thing a man finds out and understands, is his own state in the sight of God**. Well says the Holy Spirit, that we are all by nature "blind," and "deaf," and "dumb," and "asleep," and "beside ourselves," and "dead!" Nothing, nothing will ever convince man of his sin but the power of the Holy Spirit. Show him hell, and he will not flee from it; show him heaven, and he will not seek it; silence him with warnings, and yet he will not stir; prick his conscience, and yet he will remain hard. Power from on high must come down and do the work. To show man the sinner which he really is—is the special work of the Holy Spirit of God.

He that has any feeling of his own sinfulness, ought to thank God for it. That very sense of weakness, wickedness, and corruption, which perhaps makes you uncomfortable—is in reality a token for good, and a cause for praise. The first step towards being really good—is to feel *bad*. The first preparation for heaven—is to know that we deserve nothing but *hell*. Before we can be counted righteous—we must know ourselves to be miserable *sinners*. Before we can have inward happiness and peace with God—we must learn to be ashamed and confounded because of our manifold transgressions. Before we can rejoice in a well-grounded hope—we must be taught to say, "Unclean! Unclean! God, be merciful to me a sinner!"

He who really loves his own soul must beware of checking and stifling this inward feeling of sinfulness. I beseech you, by the mercies of God, do not trample on it, do not crush it, do not take it by the throat and refuse to give it your attention. Beware of taking the advice of worldly people about it. Treat it not as a case of low spirits, disordered health, or anything of the kind. Beware of listening to the devil's counsel about it. Do not try to drown it in drink and reveling; do not try to drive over it with horses, and hunting, and carriages, and field sports; do not try to purge it away by a course of card parties, and balls, and concerts. Oh, if you love your soul, do not, do not treat the first sense of sin in this miserable fashion! Do not commit spiritual suicide—do not murder your soul!

Go rather and pray God to show you what this feeling of sin means. Ask Him to send the Holy Spirit to teach you what you are, and what He would have you to do. Go and read your Bible, and see whether there is not just cause for your being uncomfortable, and whether this sense of being "wicked and bad" is not just what you have a right to expect. Who can tell but it is a seed from heaven, which is one day to bear fruit in Paradise in your complete salvation? Who can tell but it is a spark from heaven, which God means to blow up into a steady and shining fire? Who can tell but it is a little stone from above, before which the devil's kingdom in your heart is to go down, and a stone which shall prove the first foundation of a glorious temple of the Holy Spirit? Happy indeed is that man or woman who can go along with my first remark, and say, "IT IS TRUE—I HAVE MANY SINS."

II. My second remark is this. **It is of the utmost importance to have our sins removed from us and taken away.**

I say this boldly and confidently. I am aware of the multitude of things which are thought "important" in the world, and receive the first and best of men's attentions. But I know well what I am saying. I am bold to say that my Master's business deserves to be placed before all other business; and I learn from my Master's book that there is nothing of such importance to a man as to have his sins forgiven and cleansed away.

Let us remember there is a God above us. We see Him not in the city. Hurry and bustle, trade and commerce, appear to swallow up men's minds. We see Him not in the country. Farming and **laboring go on in regular course, and seed time and harvest never fail. But all this time there is an eternal Eye looking down from heaven and seeing all that people do—an eye that never slumbers, and never sleeps!** Yes! there is not only a Queen, and a government, and a landlord, and a master, and an employer, to be remembered. There is One higher, far higher than all these, who expects His dues to be paid. That One is the most high God.

This God is a God of infinite **holiness**. He is of "purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity." (Habak. 1:13.) He sees defects and infirmities where we see none. In His sight the very "heavens are not clean." (Job. 15:15.) He is a God of infinite **knowledge**. He knows every thought, and word, and action of everyone of Adam's children—there are no secrets hidden from Him. All that we think, and say, and do, is noted down and recorded in the book of His remembrance. He is a God of infinite **power**. He made all things at the beginning. He orders all things according to His will. He casts down the Kings of this world in a moment. None can stand against Him when He is angry. Above all, He is a God in whose hands are our lives and all our concerns. He first gave us being. He has kept us alive since we were born. He will remove us when He sees fit, and reckon with us according to our ways. Such is the God with whom we have to do.

Let us think of these things. Surely, as Job says, "when you consider you will be afraid." (Job 23:15.) Surely you will see it is of the utmost importance to have your sins cleansed away. Surely you will inquire, "How do matters stand between me and God?"

Let us remember, furthermore, that **death is before us!** We cannot live always. There must be an end, one day, of all our scheming and planning, and buying and selling, and working and toiling. A visitor will come to our house who will take no denial. The king of terrors will demand admission, and serve us with notice to quit. Where are the rulers and kings who governed millions a hundred years ago? Where are the rich people who made fortunes and founded houses? Where are the landlords who received rents and added field to field? Where are the laborers who ploughed the land and reaped the grain? Where are the clergymen who performed services and preached sermons? Where are the children who played in the sunshine as if they would never be old? Where are the old people who leaned on their sticks and gossiped about "the days when they were young"? There is but one answer. They are all dead, dead, dead! Strong, and beautiful, and active as they once were—they are all dust and ashes now! Mighty and important as they all thought their business—it all came to an end. And we are traveling in the same way! A few more years and we also shall be lying in our graves!

Let us think of these things. Surely when you consider your latter end you will not think the cleansing away of sin a light matter. Surely you will see something in the question, "Where are your sins?" Surely you will consider, "How am I going to die?"

Let us remember, furthermore, that **resurrection and judgment await us!** All is not over when the last breath is drawn and our bodies become a lump of cold clay. No—all is not over! The realities of existence then begin. The shadows will have passed away forever. The trumpet shall one day sound, and call us forth from our narrow bed. The graves shall be rent asunder, and their tenants shall be summoned forth to meet God. The ears that would not obey the church-going bell shall be obliged to obey another summons; the proud wills that would not submit to listen to sermons shall be compelled to listen to the judgment of God. The great white throne shall be set—the books shall be opened. Every man, woman, and child, shall be arraigned at that great assize. Everyone shall be judged according to his works. The sins of everyone shall be answered for. And everyone shall receive his eternal portion either in heaven or in hell!

Let us think of these things. Surely in remembrance of that day you must allow that my subject deserves attention. Surely you must confess that it is of the utmost importance to have your sins cleansed away. Surely you will consider, "How am I going to be judged?"

I must speak out what is upon my mind. I feel great sorrow and trouble of heart about many men and women in the world. I fear for many who live in this so-called Christian land; I fear for many who profess and call themselves Christians; I fear for many who go to church or chapel every Sunday and have a decent form of religion; I fear that they do not see the immense importance of having their sins cleansed away. I can see plainly that there are many other things which they think far more *important*. Money, and land, and farms, and horses, and carriages, and dogs, and food, and drink, and clothes, and houses, and marriages, and families, and business, and pleasure—these, these are the sort of things which many evidently think the "first things." And as for the forgiveness and cleansing away of their sins, it is a matter which has very little place in their thoughts.

See the man of business, as he pores over his ledger and account books, and runs his eye over the columns of figures. See the man of pleasure, as he tears over the country with his horses and dogs, or rushes after excitement at the races, the theater, the card party, or the ball. See the poor thoughtless laborer, as he carries off his hard-earned wages to the ale-house, and wastes them in ruining both body and soul. See them all, how thoroughly they are in earnest! See them all, how they throw their hearts into what they are doing! And then mark them all at church next Sunday—listless, careless, yawning, sleepy, and indifferent, as if there were no God, and no devil, and no Christ, and no heaven, and no hell! Mark how evident it is that they have left their hearts outside the church! Mark how plain it is that they have no real interest in Christianity! And then say whether it be not true that many know nothing of the importance of having their sins cleansed away. O, take heed lest this be the case with you!

Does any reader of these pages feel anything of the importance of being forgiven? Then, in the name of God, I call upon you to encourage that feeling more and more. This is the point to which we desire to bring all people's souls. We want you to understand that religion does not consist in professing certain opinions, and performing certain outward duties, and going through certain outward forms. It consists in being reconciled to God, and enjoying peace with Him. It consists in having our sins cleansed away, and knowing that they are cleansed. It consists in being brought back into friendship with the King of kings, and living in the sunshine of that friendship. Listen not to those who would fain persuade you that if you only "go to church" regularly you will of course go to heaven. Settle it rather in your mind, that true saving religion, such as the Bible teaches, is another kind of thing altogether. The very foundation of real Christianity is to know that you have many sins, and deserve hell—and to feel the importance of having these sins cleansed away, in order that you may go to heaven.

Happy, says the world, are they who have plenty of property and fine houses! Happy are they who have carriages, and horses, and servants, and large balances at their bankers, and great troops of friends! Happy are they who are clothed in purple and fine linen, and fare sumptuously every day, who have nothing to do but to spend their money and enjoy themselves! Yet what is the real value of such happiness? It gives no solid, real satisfaction, even at the time of enjoyment. It endures but for a few years. It only lasts until death comes in, like the hand at Belshazzar's feast, and breaks up all. And then, in too many cases, this so-called happiness is exchanged for ETERNAL MISERY IN HELL.

"Blessed," says the Word of God, "are those whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered! Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputes not iniquity! Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven! Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted! Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled!' (Psalm 32:1, 2; Matt. 5:1-8) Their blessedness shall never come to an end—their happiness is no summer-dried fountain, just failing when need is the greatest; their friends are no summer swallows, forsaking them, like Adonijah's guests, the first moment that the trumpet sounds. Their sun shall never go down. Their joy shall bud in time, and bloom in eternity. Theirs, in a word, is true happiness, for it is *for evermore*.

Do you believe what I am saying? It is all Scriptural and true. You will see one day whose words shall stand—the words of man or the Word of God. Be wise in time. Settle it in your heart this very hour, that the most important thing that man can attend to is the cleansing and forgiveness of his sins.

III. My third remark is this. **We cannot cleanse away our own sins.**

I make this statement boldly and confidently. Startling as it sounds to the natural heart—I lay it down as a piece of undeniable

Scriptural truth. In spite of all the Pharisees, and Roman Catholics, and Socinians, and Deists, and idolaters of human reason and human power—I unhesitatingly repeat my assertion.

Man's sins are many and great.

It is of the utmost importance that these sins should be cleansed away.

Man's guilt in the sight of God, is enormous.

Man's danger of hell, after he dies, is imminent and tremendous.

And yet man cannot cleanse away his own sins!

It is written, and it is true, "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified." (Rom. 3:20.)

(a) It will not cleanse away your sins to be sorry for them. You may mourn over your past wickedness, and humble yourself in sackcloth and ashes. You may shed floods of tears, and acknowledge your own guilt and danger. You may—you must—you ought to do this. But you will not by so doing wipe out your transgressions from the book of God. SORROW CANNOT MAKE ATONEMENT FOR SIN.

The convicted criminal in a court of justice is often sorry for his offences. He sees the misery and ruin they have brought upon him. He mourns over his folly in not listening to advice and in giving way to temptation. But the judge does not let him off because he is sorry. The deed has been done; the law has been broken; the penalty has been incurred. The punishment must be inflicted, notwithstanding the criminal's tears. This is precisely your position in the sight of God. Your sorrow is right, and good, and proper. But your sorrow has no power whatever to cleanse away your sins. it needs something more than penitence to take the burden off your heart.

(b) It will not cleanse away your sins to mend your life. You may reform your conduct, and turn over a new leaf; you may break off many evil habits, and take up many good ones; you may become, in short, an altered man in all your outward behavior. You may, you must, you ought to do so. Without such change no soul ever was saved. But you will not, by so doing, wipe away one particle of your guilt in God's sight. REFORMATION MAKES NO ATONEMENT FOR SIN.

The bankrupt tradesman, who owes ten thousand pounds and has not ten shillings to pay, may resolve to become a reformed character. After wasting his whole substance in riotous living, he may become steady, temperate, and respectable. It is all right and proper that he should be so—but this will not satisfy the claims of those to whom he owes money. Once more I say, this is precisely your case by nature in the sight of God. You owe Him ten thousand talents, and have "nothing to pay." Today's amendments are all very well—but they do not wipe away yesterday's debts. It requires something more that amendment and reformation to give you a light heart and to set your conscience free.

(c) It will not cleanse away your sins to become diligent in the use of the forms and ordinances of religion. You may alter your habits about Sunday, and attend services from morning till night; you may take pains to hear preaching on weekdays, as well as on Sundays; you may receive the Lord's Supper on every possible occasion, and give alms, and keep fasts. It is all very well as far as it goes. It is a right and proper thing to attend to your religious duties. But all the means of grace in the world will never do you any good so long as you trust in them as saviors. They will not bind up the wounds of your heart, and give you inward peace. FORMALITY CANNOT MAKE ATONEMENT FOR SIN.

A lantern on a dark night is a very useful thing. It can help the traveler to find his way home; it can preserve him from losing his path, and keep him from falling into danger. But the lantern itself is not the traveler's fireside. The man who is content to sit down in the road by the side of his lantern, must never be surprised if he dies of cold. If you try to satisfy your conscience with a formal attendance on means of grace, you are no wiser than this traveler. It needs something more than religious formality to take the burden from your conscience and to give you peace with God.

(d) It will not cleanse away your sins to look to others for help. It is not in the power of any child of Adam to save another's soul. No bishop, no priest, no ordained man of any Church or denomination has power to forgive sins. No human absolution, however solemnly conferred, can purge that conscience which is not purged by God. It is well to ask the counsel of the ministers of the Gospel when the conscience is perplexed. It is their office to help the laboring and heavy-laden, and to show them the way of peace. But it is not in the power of any minister to deliver any man from his guilt. We can only show the path that must be followed—we can only point out the door at which everyone must knock. It requires a hand far stronger than that of man—to take the chains off conscience, and set the prisoner free. NO CHILD OF ADAM CAN TAKE AWAY HIS BROTHER'S SINS.

The bankrupt who asks a bankrupt to set him up in business again is only losing time. The pauper who travels off to a neighbor pauper, and begs him to help him out of difficulties, is only troubling himself in vain. The prisoner does not beg his fellow-prisoner to set him free; the shipwrecked sailor does not call on his shipwrecked comrade to place him safe ashore. Help in all these cases must come from some other quarter—relief in all these cases must be sought from some other hand. It is just the same in the matter of cleansing away your sins. So long as you seek it from man, whether man ordained or man not ordained, you seek it where it cannot be found. You must go further—you must look higher. You must turn elsewhere for comfort. It is not in the power of any man on earth or in heaven to take the burden of sin from off another man's soul. "None can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him." (Psalm 49:7.)

Thousands in every age have tried to cleanse themselves from their sins in the ways I have now described, and have tried in vain. Thousands, I doubt not, are trying, at this very moment, and find themselves "nothing bettered—but rather worse." (Mark 5:26.) They are climbing up a steep precipice of ice, toiling hard, and yet slipping backwards as fast as they climb. They are pouring water into a cask full of holes—laboring busily, and yet no nearer the end of their work than when they began. They are rowing a boat against a rapid stream, plying the oar diligently, and yet in reality losing ground every minute. They are trying to build up a wall of loose sand, wearing themselves out with fatigue, and yet seeing their work roll down on them as fast as they throw it up. They are striving to

pump dry a sinking ship—the water gains on them and they will soon be drowned. Such is the experience, in every part of the world, of all who think to cleanse themselves from their sins.

I warn every reader of this paper to beware of quack medicines in religion. Beware of supposing that penitence, and reformation, and formality, and priest-craft, can ever give you peace with God. They cannot do it. It is not in them. The man who says they can must be ignorant of two things. He cannot know the length and breadth of human sinfulness—he cannot understand the height and depth of the holiness of God. There never breathed the man or woman on earth who tried to cleanse himself from his sins, and in so doing obtained relief.

If you have found out this truth by experience, be diligent to impart it to others. Show them as plainly as you can their guilt and danger by nature. Tell them, with no less plainness, the immense importance of having their sins forgiven and cleansed away. But then warn them not to waste time in seeking to be cleansed in unlawful fashions. Warn them against the specious advice of "Mr. Legality" and his companions, so vividly described in "Pilgrim's Progress." Warn them against false remedies and sham medicines for the soul. Send them to the old wicket-gate, described in Scripture, however hard and rough the way may seem. Tell them it is "the old path and the good way," and that, whatever people may say, it is the only way to obtain cleansing of our sins. (Jer. 6:16.)

IV. The fourth remark I have to make is this. **Only the blood of Jesus Christ can cleanse away all our sins.**

I enter on this part of my paper with a thankful heart. I bless God that after setting before my readers the deadly nature of their spiritual disease, I am able to set before them an almighty remedy. But I feel it needful to dwell upon this remedy for a few minutes. A thing of such wondrous efficacy as this "blood" ought to be clearly understood—there should be no vagueness or mystery in your ideas about it. When you hear of the "blood of Christ" you ought thoroughly to comprehend what the expression means.

The blood of Christ is that life-blood which the Lord Jesus shed when He died for sinners upon the cross. It is the blood which flowed so freely from His head pierced with thorns, and His hands and feet pierced with nails, and His side pierced with a spear—in the day when He was crucified and slain. The quantity of that blood may very likely have been small; the appearance of that blood was doubtless like that of our own—but never since the day when Adam was first formed out of the dust of the ground, has any blood been shed of such deep importance to the whole family of mankind.

It was blood that had been *long covenanted and promised.* In the day when sin came into the world, God mercifully engaged that "the Seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head." (Gen. 3:15.) One born of woman would appear one day, and deliver the children of Adam from Satan's power. That Seed of the woman was our Lord Jesus Christ. In the day that He suffered on the cross, He triumphed over Satan and accomplished redemption for mankind. When Jesus shed His life-blood on the cross, the head of the serpent was bruised, and the ancient promise was fulfilled.

It was blood that had been *long typified and prefigured.* Every sacrifice that was offered up by patriarchs, was a testimony of their faith in a greater sacrifice yet to cone. Every shedding of the blood of lambs and goats under the Mosaic law was meant to foreshadow the dying of the true Lamb of God for the sin of the world. When Christ was crucified, these sacrifices and types received their full accomplishment. The true sacrifice for sin was at length offered; the real atoning blood was at length shed. From that day the offerings of the Mosaic law were no longer needed. Their work was done. Like old almanacs, they might be laid aside forever.

It was blood which was of *infinite merit and value* in the sight of God. It was not the blood of one who was nothing more than a singularly holy man—but of one who was God's own "Fellow," very God of very God. (Zech. 13:7.) It was not the blood of one who died involuntarily, as a martyr for truth—but of one who voluntarily undertook to be the Substitute and Proxy for mankind, to bear their sins and carry their iniquities. It made atonement for man's transgressions; it paid man's enormous debt to God; it provided a way of righteous reconciliation between sinful man and his holy Maker; it made a road from heaven to earth, by which God could come down to man, and show mercy; it made a road from earth to heaven, by which man could draw near to God, and yet not feel afraid. Without it there could have been no remission of sin. Through it God can be "just and yet the justifier" of the ungodly. From it a fountain has been formed, wherein sinners can wash and be clean to all eternity. (Rom. 3:26.)

This wondrous blood of Christ, applied to your conscience, can cleanse you from all sin. It matters nothing what your sins may have been, "Though they be as scarlet they may be made like snow. Though they be red like crimson they can be made like wool." (Isaiah 1:18.) From sins of youth and sins of age, from sins of ignorance and sins of knowledge—from sins of open profligacy and sins of secret vice—from sins against law and sins against Gospel—from sins of head, and heart, and tongue, and thought, and imagination—from sins against each and all of the ten commandments—from all these the blood of Christ can set us free. To this end was it appointed; for this cause was it shed; for this purpose it is still a fountain open to all mankind. That thing which you cannot do for yourself can be done in a moment by this precious fountain. YOU CAN HAVE ALL YOUR SINS CLEANSED AWAY.

In this blood all *the dead saints* have been cleansed hitherto, who are now waiting the resurrection of the just. From Abel, the first of whom we read, down to the last who has fallen asleep today, they have all "washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." (Rev. 7:14.) Not one has entered into rest by his own works and deservings; not one has make himself clean before God by his own goodness and his own strength. They have all "overcome by the blood of the Lamb." (Rev. 12:11.) And their testimony in Paradise is clear and distinct, "You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." (Rev. 5:9.)

By this blood all *the living saints* of God have peace and hope now. By it they have boldness to enter into the holiest; by it they are justified and made near to God; by it their consciences are daily purged and filled with holy confidence. About it all believers are agreed, however much they may differ on other matters. Episcopalians and Presbyterians, Baptists and Methodists—all are agreed that the blood of Christ is that only thing that can cleanse the soul. All are agreed that in ourselves we are "wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." (Rev. 3:17.) But all are agreed that in the blood of Christ the chief of sinners can be made clean.

Would you like to know what we ministers of the Gospel are ordained to do? We are not set apart for no other end than to read services, and administer sacraments, and marry people, and bury the dead. We are not meant to do nothing more than show you the church, or ourselves, or our party. We are set for the work of showing people the "blood of Christ;" and except we are continually showing it, we are no true ministers of the Gospel.

Would you like to know what is our heart's desire and prayer for the souls to whom we minister? We want to bring them to the "blood of Christ." We are not content to see our churches filled, and our ordinances well attended, our congregations numerous, and our cause outwardly flourishing. We want to see men and women coming to this great Fountain for sin and uncleanness, and washing their souls in it that they may be clean. Here only is rest for the conscience. Here only is peace for the inward man. Here only is a cure for spiritual diseases. Here only is the secret of a light and happy heart. No doubt we have within us a fountain of evil and corruption. But, blessed be God, there is another Fountain of greater power still—even the precious blood of the Lamb; and, **washing daily in that other Fountain, we are clean from all sin.**

V . The fifth, and last remark I have to make, is this. **Faith is absolutely necessary, and the only thing necessary, in order to give us a saving interest in the cleansing blood of Christ.**

I ask the special attention of all my readers to this point. A mistake here is often ruinous to a man's soul. It is a great leak at the bottom of your Christianity if you do not clearly see the true way of union between Christ and the soul. That way is faith.

Church-membership and reception of the sacraments are no proof that you are washed in Christ's blood. Thousands attend a Christian place of worship, and receive the Lord's Supper from the hands of Christian ministers, and yet show plainly that they are not cleansed from their sins. Beware of despising means of grace, if you have any desire to be saved. But never, never forget that Church-membership is not faith.

Faith is the one thing needful in order to give you the benefit of Christ's cleansing blood. He is called an "atoning sacrifice through faith in His blood." "He who believes on Him has everlasting life." "By Him all who believe are justified from all things." "Being justified by faith we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ:" (Rom. 3:25; John 3:36; Acts 13:39; Rom. 5:1.)The wisdom of the whole world will never provide a better answer to an anxious inquirer than that which Paul gave to the Philippian jailor, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." (Acts 16:31.), "Are you convinced of sin?" says the Gospel. "Do you really see that you have many sins, and are deserving of hell? Do you renounce all hope of cleansing yourself from your sins by your own power? Then you are just the man for whom the Gospel provides comfort. Behold the atoning blood of Christ! Only trust in it, and this day you shall be freely pardoned. Only believe, and this very moment your sins shall be cleansed away." It is only "Believe and live." It is only "Believe and be clean." Let those who will call such doctrine rant and enthusiasm. I am bold to call it by another name. It is the "glorious Gospel" of the grace of God.

I ask you not to misunderstand my meaning in thus speaking of faith. I do not tell you that faith is the only mark of the man whose sins are cleansed away. I do not say that the faith which gives a man an interest in Christ's atoning blood, is ever found alone. **Saving faith is no barren, solitary grace. It is always accompanied by repentance and personal holiness.** But this I say confidently—that in the matter of giving the soul an interest in Christ, faith is the only thing required. In the matter of *justification before God,* faith, I repeat emphatically, stands entirely alone. **Faith is the hand that lays hold on Christ.** Faith begins, faith carries on, faith keeps up the claim which the sinner makes on the Savior. By faith we are justified. By faith we bathe our souls in the great Fountain for sin. By faith we go on obtaining fresh supplies of pardoning mercy all through our journey. By faith we live, and by faith we stand.

Nothing whatever beside this faith is required, in order to your complete justification and cleansing from all sin. Let this sink deeply into your mind. Where is the man that desires to enjoy real comfort from the Gospel? Seek, I do entreat you, to have clear and simple views of the nature of saving faith. Beware of those dark, and confused, and muddy notions of faith, by which so many distress their souls. **Dismiss from your mind the idea that faith is a mere act of the intellect. It is not assent to doctrines or articles**; it is not belief of "Paley's Evidences" or "Pearson on the Creed." **Faith is simply the grasp of a contrite heart on the outstretched hand of an Almighty Savior—the repose of a weary head on the bosom of an Almighty Friend.** Cast away all idea of work, or merit, or doing, or performing, or paying, or giving, or buying, or laboring, in the act of believing on Christ. Understand that faith is not giving—but taking; not paying—but receiving; not buying—but being enriched. Faith is the eye which looks to the brazen serpent, and looking obtains life and health; it is the mouth which drinks down the reviving medicine, and drinking receives strength and vigor for the whole body; it is the hand of the drowning man which lays hold on the rope thrown to him, and laying hold enables him to be drawn up from the deep water safe and sound. This, and nothing more than this, is the true idea of saving faith. This, and this only, is the faith that is required to give you a saving interest in the blood of Christ. Believe in this way, and your sins are at once cleansed away!

Nothing whatever except this faith will ever give you an interest in Christ's atoning blood. You may go daily to Christ's church; you may often use Christ's name; you may bow the head at the name of Jesus; you may eat of the bread and wine which Christ commanded to be received. But all this time, without faith, you have neither part nor lot in Christ—without faith, so far as you are concerned, Christ's blood has been shed in vain.

I desire to enter my solemn protest against the modern notions which prevail on this solemn subject. I protest against the opinion which many now maintain, that any are saved by Christ excepting those who *believe*. There is much vague talk in some quarters about the "Fatherhood of God" and the "love of God," as if we who are called "Evangelical" denied these glorious truths. We do not deny them at all—we hold them as strongly as any. We give place to no man in this matter. But we utterly deny that God is the spiritual Father of any excepting those who are His *children by faith* in Christ Jesus. (Gal. 3:26.) We utterly deny that people have a right to take comfort in God's love, except they *believe* on Him through whom that love has been manifested, even his dear Son. The atoning blood of the Son of God is the grand exhibition of God's love towards sinners. The sinner who desires to be saved, must have personal dealings with Him who shed that blood. By personal faith he must wash in it; by personal faith he must drink of it; by personal faith he must put in his own claim to all its blessings. Without this faith there can be no salvation.

Would you know one main object which we ministers have in view in our preaching? We preach that you may *believe*. Faith is the thing that we desire to see produced in your souls; faith is the thing that, once produced, we desire to see growing. We rejoice to see you coming regularly to hear the Gospel; we rejoice to see an orderly, well-behaved congregation of worshipers—but faith, faith, faith—is the grand result which we long to see in your souls. Without faith we cannot feel comfortable about you; without faith you are in imminent danger of hell. According to your faith will be the strength of your Christianity; according to the degree of your faith will be

the increase of your peace and hope, and the closeness of your walk with God. You will not wonder that there is nothing we care for so much as your believing.

I hasten to bring my remarks to a conclusion. I have tried to show you five things, and have endeavored to set them before you in plain language.

(1) I have told you that you have many sins.

(2) I have told you that it is of the utmost importance to have these sins cleansed away.

(3) I have told you that you cannot cleanse away your own sins.

(4) I have told you that the blood of Christ cleanses from all sin.

(5) I have told you that faith only is needful—but absolutely needful, to give you any interest in Christ's blood.

I have told you what I am firmly persuaded is God's own truth—the truth on which I desire myself to live and die. I pray God that the Holy Spirit may apply this truth with mighty power to many souls.

Let me wind up all this subject by three words of parting application. Our years are passing quickly away. The night comes, when no man can work. Yet a little time, and our place in another world will be settled to all eternity. A few more years, and we shall be either in heaven or in hell. Surely this fact alone ought to set us thinking.

1. My first word of application shall be a **QUESTION**. I address it to all into whose hands this paper may fall, without distinction or exception. It is a question which concerns deeply every man, woman, and child in the world, whatever be their rank or station. It is the question which rises naturally out of our subject, ***"Where are your sins?"***

Remember, I do not ask you what you call yourself in religion. I do not ask you where you go—or whom you hear—or to what party you belong—or what are your peculiar opinions about Church or Dissent. I leave such matters alone. I am weary to see the enormous waste of time of which multitudes are yearly guilty in respect to these matters. I am for the realities and substance of Christianity; I want to fix your attention on the things which will look important in the hour of death and at the last day. And I say boldly, that one of the first questions which demand your notice, is the question, *"Where are your sins?"*

I am not asking what you intend, or mean, or hope, or resolve to aim at, at some future time; I leave all that to children and fools. Tomorrow is the devil's day—but today is God's. And here, as in God's sight, this very day, while you are reading my paper, I ask you to find an answer to my question, *"Where are your sins?"*

I ask you to mark what I am going to say. I say it calmly, deliberately, advisedly, and with consideration. I tell you that at this moment there are only two places in which your sins can be, and I defy the wisdom of the world to find out a third. Either your sins are UPON YOURSELF, unpardoned, unforgiven, uncleansed, unwashed away—sinking you daily nearer to hell! Or else your sins are UPON CHRIST, taken away, forgiven, pardoned, blotted out and cleansed away by Christ's precious blood! I am utterly unable to see any third place in which a man's sins can possibly be. I am utterly unable to discover any third alternative. Forgiven or unforgiven—pardoned or not pardoned; cleansed away or not cleansed—this, according to the Bible, is the exact position of everyone's sins. How is it with you? *"Where are your sins?"*

I beseech you to lay this question to heart, and never to rest until you can give it an answer. I do entreat you to examine your own state—to prove your own spiritual condition, and to find out bow matters stand between yourself and God. Let the time past suffice for trifling and indecision about your soul. Give it up—give it up, give it up forever. Let the time past suffice for a mere formal, aimless, meaningless, comfortless religion. Lay it aside, lay it aside—lay it aside forever. Be real; be thorough; be in earnest. Deal with your soul as a reasonable being; deal with it as one who feels that eternal interests are at stake; deal with it as one who has made up his mind, and is determined to live in suspense no longer. Oh, resolve this very day to find an answer to my question *"Where are your sins?" Are they on yourself—or are they on Christ?*

2. My second word of application shall be *an* **INVITATION**. I address it to all who feel unable to give a satisfactory answer to the question of my paper. I address it to all who feel sinful, and lost, and condemned, and unfit to die. It is that invitation which is the glory of the Gospel. I say to you, *"Come to Christ, and be cleansed in His blood without delay."*

I know not what you may have been in your past life—it matters nothing. You may have broken every commandment under heaven; you may have sinned with a high hand against light and knowledge; you may have despised a father's warnings and a mother's tears; you may have run greedily into every excess of riot, and plunged into every kind of abominable profligacy—you may have turned your back entirely on God, His day, His house, His ministers, His word. I say again it matters nothing. Do you feel your sins? Are you sick of them? Are you ashamed of them? Are you weary of them? Then *come to Christ* just as you are, and Christ's blood shall make you clean.

I see you lingering, and doubting, and fancying the news too good to be true. I hear the devil whispering in your ear, "You are too bad; you are too wicked to be saved." I charge you, in God's name, not to give way to such doubts. I remind you that Satan always was a liar. One time he told you it was "too soon" for religion—and now he tells you it is "too late." I tell you confidently, that Jesus Christ is "able to save to the uttermost all who come to God by Him." (Heb. 7:25.) I tell you confidently, that He has received, cleansed, and pardoned thousands as bad as you. He never changes. Only come to Him, and His blood shall cleanse you from all sin.

I can well fancy that you feel at a loss, and know not what to do. I can well believe that you do not see which way to turn, or what step to take, or in what manner to follow out my counsel. *I bid you go and say so to the Lord Jesus Christ!* I bid you seek some quiet solitary place, and pour out your heart before Him. Tell Him that you are a poor miserable sinner. Tell Him that you know not how to pray, or what to say, or what to do. But tell Him that you have heard something about His blood cleansing a man from all sin, and entreat Him to think on you, and cleanse your soul. Oh, take this advice, and who can tell but you may say one day, "The blood of Christ does indeed cleanse a man from all sin."

For the last time I offer my invitation. I stand in the life-boat alongside the wreck to which you are clinging, and I entreat you to come in. The day is far spent; the night is coming on; the clouds are gathering; the waves are rising. Yet a little time and the old wreck of this world will go to pieces. Come into the life-boat; come in and be safe. Come to the blood of Christ; wash, and be clean. Come with all your sins to Christ, and cast them on Him. He will bear them away; He will cleanse them; He will pardon them. Only believe and be saved.

3. My last word shall be an **EXHORTATION**. I address it to all who have been taught by the Spirit to feel their sins, and have fled to the hope set before them in the Gospel. I address it to all who have discovered the grand truth that they are guilty sinners, and have washed in the blood of Christ in order to have their sins cleansed away. That exhortation shall be short and simple. I bid them "cling to Christ."

Cling to Christ, I say—and never forget your debt to Him. Sinners you were, when you were first called by the Holy Spirit, and fled to Jesus. Sinners you have been, even at your best, from the day of your conversion. Sinners you will find yourselves to your dying hour, having nothing to boast of in yourselves. Then cling to Christ. Cling to Christ, I say—and make use of His atoning blood every day. Go to Him every morning as your morning sacrifice, and confess your need of His salvation. Go to Him every night, after the bustle of the day, and plead for fresh absolution. **Wash in the great Fountain every evening, after all the defilement of contact with the world.** "He who is fully washed, needs only to wash his feet." But his feet he needs to wash. (John 13:10.)

Cling to Christ, I say—and show the world how you love Him. Show it by obedience to His commandments. Show it by conformity to His image. Show it by following His example. Make your Master's cause lovely and beautiful before people, by your own holiness of temper and conversation. Let all the world see that he who is much forgiven is the man who loves much, and that he who loves most is the man who does most for Christ. (Luke 7:47.)

Cling to Christ, I say—and have high thoughts of the atonement made by His blood upon the cross. Think highly of His incarnation and His example—think highly of His miracles and His words—think highly of His resurrection, and intercession, and coming again. But think highest of all of Christ's sacrifice, and the atoning sacrifice made by His death. Contend earnestly for the old faith concerning His atonement. See in the old doctrine that He died as a Substitute for sinners, the only solution of a thousand passages in the Old Testament, and a hundred passages in the New. Never, never be ashamed to let people know that you derive all your comfort from the atoning blood of Christ, and from His substitution for you on the cross.

Cling to Christ, I say lastly—and make much of the old foundation truths concerning salvation by His blood. These are the old friends to which our souls will turn at last in the hour of our departure. These are the ancient doctrines on which we shall lean back our aching heads, when life is ebbing away and death is in sight. We shall not ask ourselves then whether we have been Episcopalians or Presbyterians, Churchmen or Dissenters. We shall not find comfort then in new-fangled notions and human inventions—in baptism and church-membership, in sects and parties—in ceremonies and forms. Nothing will do us good then but the blood of Christ. Nothing will support us then but the witness of the Spirit, that in the blood of Jesus we have washed, and by that blood have been made clean.

I commend these things to the serious attention of all who read this volume. If you never knew these things before, may you soon become acquainted with them! If you have known them in time past, may you know them better for time to come! We can never know too well the right answer to the mighty question, *"Where are your sins?"*

Where Are You?

by J. C. Ryle

Then the woman saw that the tree was good for food and delightful to look at, and that it was desirable for obtaining wisdom. So she took some of its fruit and ate it; she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves. Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and they hid themselves from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. So the Lord God called out to the man and said to him, "**Where are you?**" (Genesis 3:6-9)

Reader,
The question before your eyes is the first which God asked of man after the fall. It is the question He put to Adam in the day that he ate the forbidden fruit, and became a sinner.

In vain did Adam and his wife hide themselves among the trees of the garden of Eden. In vain did they try to escape the eye of the all-seeing God. Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and they hid themselves from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. So the Lord God called out to the man and said to him, "**Where are you?**" Think for a moment how awful those words must have sounded! Think what the feelings of Adam and Eve must have been!

Reader, 6,000 years have well-near passed away since this question was first asked. Millions of Adam's children have lived and died, and gone to their own place. Millions are yet upon earth, and everyone of them has a soul to be lost or saved. But no question ever has been, or even can be asked more solemn than that which is before you—Where are you? *Where are you in the sight of God?* Come now, and give me your attention, while I tell you a few things which may throw light upon this question.

I know not who you are—whether you are a Churchman or a Dissenter—whether you are learned or unlearned—whether you are rich or poor—whether you are old or young—about all this I know nothing. But I do know that you have got an immortal soul, and I

want that soul to be saved. I do know that you have got to stand before the judgment seat of God, and I want you to be prepared for it. I do know that you will be forever in heaven or hell, and I want you to escape hell, and reach heaven. I do know that the Bible contains most solemn things about the inhabitants of the earth, and I want every man, woman, and child in the world to hear them. I believe every word in the Bible; and because I believe it, I ask every reader of this paper, *"Where are you in the sight of God?"*

I. In the first place, **there are many people about whom the Bible shows me *I ought to be exceedingly afraid*.** Reader, are you one of them?

These are they, who, if Bible words mean anything, have not yet been converted and born again. They are not justified. They are not sanctified. They have not the Spirit. They have no faith. They have no grace. Their sins are not forgiven. Their hearts are not changed. They are not ready to die. They are not fit for heaven. They are neither godly, nor righteous, nor saints. If they are, Bible words mean nothing at all.

Some of these people, to all appearance, think no more about their souls than the beasts that perish. There is nothing to show that they think of a life to come any more than the horse and ox, which have no understanding. Their treasure is evidently all on earth. Their good things are plainly all on this side of the grave. Their attention is swallowed up by the perishable things of time. Eating, drinking, and clothing—money, houses, and land—business, pleasure, or politics—marrying, games, or entertainment—these are the kind of things which fill their hearts. They live as if there were no such book as the Bible. They go on as if resurrection and eternal judgment were a mere fable. As to grace, and conversion, and justification, and holiness—they are things which, like Gallio, they have no concern for—they are words and names they are either ignorant of, or despise. They are all going to die. They are all going to be judged. And yet they seem to be even more hardened than the devil, for they appear neither to believe nor tremble. Alas, what a state this is for an immortal soul to be in! But oh, how common!

Some of the people I speak of have got a form of religion—but after all it is nothing but a form. They profess and call themselves Christians. They go to a place of worship on Sunday. But when you have said that—you have said all. Where is the religion of the New Testament to be seen in their lives? Nowhere at all! Sin is plainly not considered their worst enemy, nor the Lord Jesus their best friend—nor the will of God their rule of life—nor salvation the great end of their existence. The spirit of slumber keeps possession of their hearts, and they are at ease, self-satisfied, and content. They are in a Laodicean frame of mind, and fancy they have enough religion.

God speaks to them continually; by mercies—by afflictions—by sermons; but they will not hear. Jesus knocks at the door of their hearts—but they will not open. They are told of death and eternity, and remain unconcerned. They are warned against the love of the world, and plunge into it week after week without shame. They hear of Christ coming upon earth to die for sinners, and go away unmoved. There seems a place in their hearts for everything but God—room for business—room for pleasures—room for trifling—room for sin—room for the devil—room for the world—but, like the inn at Bethlehem, no room for Him who made them—no admission for Jesus, the Spirit, and the Word. Alas, what a condition of things is this! But alas, how common!

Reader, I put it solemnly to your conscience, as in the sight of God, are you one of those people whom I have just described? There are thousands of such people in our land—thousands in Great Britain—thousands in Ireland—thousands in our country parishes—thousands in our towns—thousands among churchmen—thousands among dissenters—thousands among rich—thousands among poor. Now, are you one of them? If you are, I fear for you—I tremble for you—I am alarmed for you—I am exceedingly afraid for you!

What is it that I fear for you? I fear everything. I fear lest you should persist in rejecting Christ until you have sinned away your own soul. I fear lest you be given over to a reprobate mind, and awake no more. I fear lest you come to such deadness and hardness of heart, that nothing but the voice of the archangel and the trumpet of God will break your sleep. I fear lest you cling to this vain world so closely, that nothing but death will part it and you. I fear lest you should live without Christ, die without pardon, rise again without hope, receive judgment without mercy, and sink into hell without remedy!

Reader, I must warn you, though I may seem like Lot, as one that jests. I do solemnly warn you to flee from the wrath to come. I entreat you to remember that the Bible is all true, and must be fulfilled—that the end of your present ways is misery and sorrow—that without holiness no man shall see the Lord—that the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the people who forget God—that God shall one day take account of all your doings, and that Christless sinners like yourself can never stand in His sight, for He is holy, and a consuming fire. Oh, that you would consider these things! Where is the man that can hold his finger for a minute in the flame of a candle? Who shall dwell with everlasting burnings?

I know well the thoughts that Satan will put into your heart, as you read these words. I know well the excuses that you are going to make. You will tell me "Religion is all very well—but a man must live." I answer, "It is quite true a man must live—but it is no less true that he must also *die*." You may tell me, "A man who has to work for his bread, has no time for anything else—he cannot *starve*." I answer, that "I do not want any one to starve—but neither also do I want anyone to burn in hell." You may tell me, "A man must mind *his business* first in this world." I answer, Yes! and the first business a man should mind is his eternal business—*the business of his soul*."

Reader, I beseech you, in all affection, to break off your sins—to repent and be converted. I beseech you to change your course—to alter your ways about religion, to turn from your present carelessness about your soul, and become a new man. I offer to you through Jesus Christ, the forgiveness of all past sins—free and complete forgiveness—ready, present, everlasting forgiveness. I tell you, in my Master's name, that if you will turn to the Lord Jesus Christ, this forgiveness shall at once be your own. Oh, do not refuse so gracious an invitation! Do not hear of Christ dying for you—Christ shedding His own blood for you—Christ stretching out His hands to you, and yet remain unmoved. Do not love this poor perishing world better than eternal life. Dare to be bold and decided. Resolve to come out from the broad way which leads to destruction. Arise and escape for your life, while it is called today. Repent, believe, pray, and be saved.

Reader, I fear for you in your present state. My heart's desire and prayer is that God may teach you to fear for yourself.

II. In the second place, **there are many people about whom the Bible shows me *I ought to stand in doubt*.** Reader, are you one of these?

There are many whom I must call "**almost Christians**," for I know no other expression in the Bible, which so exactly describes their state. They have many things about them which are right, and good, and praiseworthy, in the sight of God. They are regular and moral in their lives. They are free from glaring outward sins. They keep up many decent and proper habits. They are usually diligent in their attendance on means of grace. They appear to love the preaching of the Gospel. They are not offended at the truth as it is in Jesus, however plainly it may be spoken. They have no objection to religious company, religious books, and religious talk. They agree to all you say when you speak to them about their souls. And all this is well.

But still there is no movement in the hearts of these people that even a microscope can detect. They are like those who stand still. Weeks after weeks, years after years roll over their heads, and they are just where they were. They sit under our pulpits. They approve of our sermons. And yet, like Pharaoh's lean cows, they are nothing the better, apparently, for all they receive. There is always the same regularity about them—the same constant attendance on means of grace—the same wishing and hoping—the same way of talking about religion—but there is nothing more. There is no going forward in their Christianity. There is no life, and heart, and reality in it. Their souls seem to be at a deadlock. And all this is sadly wrong.

Reader, are you one of these people? There are thousands of them in this day—thousands in our churches, and thousands in our chapels. I ask you to give an honest answer to the question—Is this the state of your soul in the sight of God? If it is, I can only say your condition is most unsatisfactory. As the apostle said to the Galatians, so say I unto you—"I stand in doubt of you."

How can I feel otherwise about you? There are but two sides in the world—the side of Christ and the side of the devil; and yet you make it doubtful on which side you ought to be placed. I dare not say you are altogether careless about religion—but I cannot call you decided. I shrink from numbering you among the ungodly—but I may not place you among the Lord's children. You have some light; but is it saving knowledge? You have some feeling; but is it grace? You are not profane; but are you a man of God? You may possibly be one of the Lord's people; but you dwell so near the borders, that I cannot discern to what group you belong. You may not perhaps be spiritually dead; but like a sickly tree in winter, I hardly know whether you are alive. And thus you live on without satisfactory evidences. I cannot help doubting about you. Surely there is a cause.

I cannot read the secrets of your hearts. Perhaps there is some **bosom sin**, which you are holding fast and will not give up. This is a disease which checks the growth of many a professing Christian. Perhaps you are kept back by the **fear of man**—you are afraid of the blame or laughter of your fellow-creatures. This is an iron chain that fetters many a soul. Perhaps you are careless about **private prayer** and communion with God. This is one reason why multitudes are weak and sickly in spirit. But whatever your reason be, I warn you in all affection, to take care what you are doing. Your state is neither satisfactory nor safe. Like the Gibeonites, you are found in the train of Israel—but like them you have no title to Israel's portion, Israel's consolations, and Israel's rewards. Oh, awake to a sense of your danger! Strive to enter in.

Reader, you must give up this halting between two opinions, if ever you mean to enjoy good evidences of your salvation. There must be an alteration in you. There must be a move. There is no real standing still in true Christianity. If God's work is not going forward in a man's heart, the devil's is; and if a man is always at the same point in religion, the probability is that he has got no religion at all. It is not enough to wear Christ's livery; we must also fight Christ's battles. It is not enough to cease to do evil; we must also learn to do well. It will not suffice to do no harm; we must also labor to do good. Oh, tremble, lest you should prove an unprofitable receiver of God's talents—a barren cumberer of the ground, and your end be to be burned. Remember, he that is not with Christ, is against Him.

Reader, I charge you strongly never to rest until you have found out whether you have grace in your heart or not. Wishes, and desires, and good feelings, and convictions, are all excellent things in their way—but they alone will never save you. I like to see buds and blossoms on a tree—but I like better to see ripe fruit. The way-side hearers in the parable listened—but the Word took no root in them—they were not saved. The stony ground hearers listened with joy—but the Word had no depth in them—they were not saved. The thorny ground hearers brought forth something like fruit—but the Word was choked by the world—they were not saved. Do you tremble at the Word? So also did Felix—but he was not saved. Do you like to hear good sermons, and do many things which are right? So also did Herod—but he was not saved. Do you wish to die the death of the righteous? So did Balaam—but he was not saved. Have you knowledge? So had Judas Iscariot—but he was not saved. And shall you be saved as you are? I doubt it. Remember Lot's wife!

Reader, once more I call upon you to take care what you are doing. If you will not stir up yourself to go forward, how should I feel anything but doubt about your soul?

But there are others about whom I stand in doubt, who are in worse case even than the "almost Christians." These are they who once made a high profession of religion—but have now given it up. They were once reckoned to be true believers—but they have turned back again to the world and fallen away. They have gone back from the point of religion they once seemed to have reached. They walked no more in the ways they once seemed to choose. In short, they are *BACKSLIDERS*.

Reader, is this the state of your soul? If it is, know for a certainty that your condition is most unsatisfactory. It matters little what your past experience was. It proves little that you were once counted among true Christians. It may have been all a mistake and a delusion. It is your present condition of soul that I look at, and as I do so, I stand in doubt.

I believe there was a time when all the saints of God who saw you rejoiced at the sight. You seemed then to love the Lord Jesus in sincerity, and to be willing to give up the broad way forever, and forsake all for the Gospel's sake. The Word of God appeared sweet and precious to you; the voice of Christ's ministers a most pleasant sound; the assembly of the Lord's people the place you loved best; the company of true believers your chief delight. You were never missing at the weekly meetings. Your place was never empty at Church. Your Bible was never long out of your hands. There were no days in your life without prayer. Your zeal was indeed fervent. Your religious affections were truly warm. You did run well for a season. But, oh, reader, *where, where are you now?*

You have gone back to the world. You lingered; you looked back; you returned—I fear you had left your heart behind you. You have taken up the old man's deeds once more. You have left your first love. Your goodness has proved like the morning clouds, and as the early dew it has gone away. Your serious impressions are fast dying off; they are getting weaker and fainter every day, Your convictions are fast withering up; they are changing color like leaves in autumn—they will soon drop off and disappear. The gray

hairs, which tell of decline, are coming here and there upon you. The preaching you once hung upon, now wearies you. The books you delighted in, give pleasure no more. The progress of Christ's Gospel is no longer interesting. The company of God's children is no longer sought. *They or you must be changed.* You are becoming shy of holy people, impatient of rebuke and advice, uncertain in your tempers, careless about little sins, not afraid of mixing with the world. *Once it was not so!*

You may keep up some form of religion perhaps—but as to vital godliness you are fast cooling down. Already you are lukewarm; by and by you will be cold; and before long you will be icy, religion-frozen, and more dead than you were before. You are grieving the Spirit, and He will soon leave you. You are tempting the devil, and he will soon come to you; your heart is ready for him—your last state will be worse than your first. Oh, reader, strengthen the things which remain, which are ready to die. How can I possibly help feeling doubt about your soul?*

* I find that many people object to the expression, "You are grieving the Spirit, and He will soon leave you." On calm reflection I am not disposed to alter it. I think it is dangerous to attempt to be more systematic than the Bible in our theology. I think there is Scriptural warrant for saying that an unconverted man who possesses great light and knowledge in the things of religion, and yet refuses to give up sin and the world, does, in a certain sense, grieve the Holy Spirit. I would refer to Isaiah 63:10; Acts 7:51; Heb. 10:29. In taking this ground, I believe I am in entire harmony with one of the most Scriptural divines that ever lived—I mean John Bunyan. In "Pilgrim's Progress" he represents the man in the iron cage, at the Interpreter's house, saying to Christian, "I sinned against the light of the Word, and the goodness of God. I have grieved the Spirit, and He is gone. I tempted the devil, and he is come to me. I have provoked God to anger, and He has left me."

The length to which people may go in a profession of religion, and yet remain unconverted in heart, and be lost at last, is one of the most awful and soul-searching points in theology.

But I cannot let you go without trying to do you good. I do pity you indeed, because you are so unhappy. I know it—I am sure of it—it is useless to deny it. You have been unhappy ever since you fell away. You are unhappy at home, and unhappy abroad, unhappy in company, and unhappy alone; unhappy when you lie down, and unhappy when you rise up. You may have got riches, honor, family, friends—but yet *the sting* remains. There is a famine of consolation about you—there is an utter dearth of inward peace. You are sick at heart—you are ill at ease—you are discontented with everybody, because you are discontented with yourself. You are like a bird that has wandered from her nest—you never feel in your right place. You have too much religion to enjoy the world, and too little religion to enjoy God. You are weary of life, and yet afraid to die. Truly the words of Solomon are made good in your case, "You are filled with your own ways."

Reader, notwithstanding all your backslidings, there is hope even for you. **There is no disease of soul that the glorious Gospel cannot cure.** There is a remedy even for your case—humbling, pride-lowering, I know—but a sure remedy; and I earnestly beseech you to take it. That remedy is the Fountain opened for all sins—the free mercy of God in Christ Jesus. Go and wash in that Fountain without delay, and Jesus Christ shall make you whole!

Take down your neglected Bible and see how David fell and lay in foul sin a whole year, and yet when he repented and turned to God, there was mercy for him. Turn to the history of the apostle Peter, and see how he denied his Master three times with an oath, and yet when he wept and humbled himself, there was mercy for him. Hear what comfortable words our Lord and Savior sends you this day —"Come unto Me all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "You have played the harlot with many lovers, yet return again to Me." "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." "Return, you backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings." Oh, that you may take up the words of Israel this day, and reply, "Behold I come unto You, for You are the Lord my God." (Matt. 11:28; Jer. 3:1; Isai. 1:18; Jer. 3:22.)

Reader, I pray God these words may not be brought before you in vain. But remember, until you turn from your backslidings, I must stand in doubt about your soul.

III. In the third place, **there are some people about whom the Bible tells me *I ought to feel a good hope.*** Reader, are you one of these?

The people I speak of have found out that they are guilty sinners, and have fled to Christ by faith for salvation. They have found out that sin is a miserable and unhappy thing, and they hate it, and long to be free from its presence altogether. In themselves they see nothing but weakness and corruption—but in the Lord Jesus they see the very things their souls require—pardon, peace, light, comfort, and strength. Christ's blood, Christ's cross, Christ's righteousness, Christ's intercession—these are the things on which their minds love to dwell. Their affections are now set on things above. They care for nothing so much as pleasing God. While they live their chief desire is to live to the Lord. When they die, their only desire is to die in the Lord. After death, their hope is that they shall be with the Lord.

Reader, is this the state of your soul? Do you know anything of the faith and hope, and affections, and experience, which I have just described? Do you find anything in your heart which answers to the account I have just given? If you do, I thank God for it—I congratulate you on your condition—I feel a good hope about your soul.

I know well that you live in a world full of trials. You are yet in the wilderness; you are not at home. I know well that pride, and unbelief, and sloth, are continually struggling for the mastery within you. You have fightings without and fears within. I doubt not your heart is so treacherous and deceitful, that you are often sick of yourself and say, "Never was any heart so bad as mine!" But, notwithstanding all this, I must hope well for your soul.

I hope, because I believe that God has begun a work in you which He will never allow to be overthrown. Who taught you to hate sin and love Christ? Who made you come out from the world and delight in God's service? These things do not come from your own heart. Nature bears no such fruit. These things are the work of God, who where He begins, always finishes; who where He gives grace, will also give glory. Surely here is ground for hope.

I hope, because I believe you have a saving interest in an everlasting covenant, a covenant ordered in all things and sure. The stamp of heaven is upon you. The marks of the Lord Jesus are on your soul. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, have all engaged to complete the

salvation of your soul. There is a three-fold cord around you which never yet was broken. Surely here is ground for hope.

I hope, because you have a Savior whose blood can cleanse from all sin—a Savior who invites all, and casts out none who come to Him—a Savior who will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax—a Savior who can be touched with the feeling of your infirmities, and is not ashamed to call you brethren—a Savior who never alters—the same yesterday, today, and forever, always able to save to the uttermost, always mighty to save. Surely here is ground for hope.

I hope, because the love of Christ is a love that passes knowledge. So free and undeserved! So costly, even unto death! So powerful and all-conquering! So unchanging and enduring! So patient and forbearing! So tender and sympathizing! Truly our sins pass knowledge, and this love of Jesus is the very love our souls need. Surely here is ground for hope.

I hope, because God has given to you exceeding great and precious promises—promises of being kept unto the end—promises of grace for every time of need, and strength according to your day—promises that never yet were broken, all yes and amen in Christ Jesus. Surely here is ground for hope.

Oh, reader, if you are a believer, these things are a strong foundation. If God is for you, who shall be against you? There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. Nothing shall ever separate them from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Come now, and let me tell you what I want you, and every true Christian to aim at. I want you to seek *more hope*. I want you not to rest satisfied with that little mite of confidence, which forms the whole stock of many of God's children. I want you to seek the full assurance of hope—that lively hope which makes a man never ashamed.

I speak as a fellow-traveler in the narrow way. I speak as one who desires that his own hope may grow and increase every year that he lives, and wishes the hope of all his brethren to grow too. I know and am persuaded that I write things which are for your peace. As ever you would have few days of darkness—as ever you would feel God's face smiling on your soul—as ever you would have joy and peace in believing—by all your recollections of past short-comings—by all your desires of comfort in time to come—I charge you, I exhort you, I beseech you to seek the full assurance of hope.

Ah, reader, if you are a true believer, you know well that we need these mutual exhortations! You and I are but 'children' in the Lord's service, at our very best. Our souls are ever ready to cleave to the dust. There is room for improvement in us every day. Listen then, while I tell you a few things which we must never forget, if we would enjoy more hope—which we must never lose sight of, if we would keep it when we have got it.

1. If we want to grow in grace, and have more hope, ***we must seek a more experimental knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.*** How little do we know of Him! Our cold affections towards Him are a witness against ourselves. If our eyes were more open to what He is and does for us—we would love Him more. There are some Christians whose minds seem ever running on the doctrine of sanctification, to the exclusion of everything else. They can argue warmly about little points of practice; yet they are cold about Christ. They live by rule, they walk strictly, they do many things, they fancy in a short time they shall be very strong. But all this time they lose sight of this grand truth—that **nothing is so sanctifying as knowledge of the Lord Jesus, and communion with Him.** "Abide in Me," He says Himself, "and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit, unless it abides in the vine; no more can you unless you abide in Me." Christ must be the spring of our holiness—as well as the rock of our faith. Christ must be all in all.

I doubt not He is precious to you that believe. Precious He ought to be, because of His offices, and precious because of His work. Precious He ought to be, for what He has done already—He has called us, quickened us, washed us, justified us. Precious He ought to be for what He is doing even now—strengthening us, interceding for us, sympathizing with us. Precious He ought to be for what He will do yet—He will keep us to the end, raise us, gather us at His coming, present us faultless before God's throne, give us rest with Him in His kingdom. But oh, reader, Christ ought to be far more precious to us than He ever has been yet!

I take you to record, if it were the last word of my life, I believe that nothing but the knowledge of Christ will ever feed a man's spirit. All our darkness arises from not keeping close to Him. The forms of religion are valuable as helps—and public ordinances are profitable to strengthen us—but it must be Christ crucified for sinners—Christ seen with the eye of faith—Christ present in the heart—Christ as the bread of life, and Christ as the water of life—this must be the doctrine we must ever cling to. Nothing else will either save, satisfy, or sanctify a sinful soul. We all need a more experimental knowledge of Christ.

2. If we would grow in grace and hope let us begin here. If we want to grow in grace and have more hope, we must seek ***more knowledge of our own hearts.*** "The human heart is most deceitful and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is? But I know! I, the Lord, search all hearts and examine secret motives." (Jeremiah 17:9-10) We imagine we are acquainted with our heart—and we are not. The half of the sin that is in them has hitherto been hidden from our eyes. We have not the slightest idea how much they might deceive us if tried, and into what depths of Satan the very best of us might fall. But we all know by bitter experience, that by trusting our hearts we have often made sad mistakes. We have sometimes committed such errors that we have lost sight of our hope, and been ready to believe we had no grace at all. Oh, if we would be happy Christians, let us cease to put confidence in our hearts. Let us learn to expect nothing from them but weakness and feebleness. Let us cease to look to frames and feelings for our comforts. Hope built on anything within us must always be wavering and unstable.

3. If we want to grow in grace and have more hope, *we must seek* ***more holiness in life and conversation***. This is a humbling lesson to dwell upon—but one that cannot be dwelt upon too much. There is an inseparable connection between a close walk with God, and comfort in our religion. Let this never be forgotten. Truly, many of the vessels in the Lord's house are very dull and dingy. When I look around, I see many things missing among us, which Jesus loves. I miss the ***meekness*** and gentleness of our Master—many of us are harsh, rough-tempered, and censorious, and we flatter ourselves that we are faithful. I miss real ***boldness*** in confessing Christ before men—we often think much more of the time to be silent, than the time to speak. I miss real ***humility***—not many of us like to take the lowest place, and esteem everyone better than ourselves, and our own strength perfect weakness. I miss real ***charity***—few of us have that unselfish spirit, which seeks not its own—there are few who are not more taken up with their own feelings and their own happiness than that of others. I miss real ***thankfulness*** of spirit—we complain, and murmur, and fret, and brood over the things we have not, and forget the things we have. We are seldom content; there is generally a Mordecai at our gate. I

miss decided ***separation from the world***—the line of distinction is often rubbed out. Many of us, like the chameleon, are always taking the color of our company we become so like the ungodly, that it strains a man's eyes to see the difference. Reader, these things ought not so to be. If we want more hope, let us be zealous of good works.

4. If we want to grow in grace, and have a more lively hope, *we must seek* ***more watchfulness in seasons of prosperity***. I know no time in a believer's life, when his soul is in such real danger, as it is when all things go well with him. I know no time when a believer is so likely to contract spiritual diseases, and lay the foundation of many days of darkness and doubt in his inward man. You and I like the course of our life to run smoothly—and it is natural to flesh and blood to do so. But you and I have little idea how perilous this smooth course is to our religion. The seeds of sickness are generally sown in health. It is the holiday time when lessons are forgotten. It is the sweet things which do harm to the children, and not the bitter. It is the world's favor which injures believers far more than the world's frown. David committed no adultery while fleeing before the face of Saul—it was when Saul was dead and he was king in his stead, and there was peace in Israel. Christian, in "Pilgrim's Progress," did not lose his evidence while he was fighting with Apollyon—it was when he was sleeping in a pleasant arbor, and no enemy seemed near. Oh, if we would have a lively hope, let us watch in the days of prosperity, and be sober.

5. If we want to grow in grace, and have a more lively hope, *we must seek more* ***faith and contentment in time of trial***. Trial often makes a righteous man speak unadvisedly with his lips, and say and do things which rise like mist between his soul and Christ. Trial is a fire which often brings much dross to the surface of a believer's heart, and makes him say, "God has forgotten me, there is no hope for my soul; I am cast out of the Lord's sight; I do well to complain." Yet trial is the hand of a Father chastening us for our profit, however slow we may be to believe it. **The rod of affliction is often sent in answer to a prayer for sanctification—it is one of God's ways of carrying on that work of sanctification which we profess to desire.** Jacob, and Joseph, and Moses, and David, all found this. Blessed are they who take patiently the Lord's medicines—who bear the cross in silence, and say, "It is well." Afflictions well borne are spiritual promotions. Patience having a perfect work in the time of affliction, will sooner or later yield a precious harvest of inward hope.

6. If we would grow in grace, and have a more lively hope, we must seek *more* ***preparedness for Christ's second coming***. I know no doctrine more sanctifying and quickening than the doctrine of Christ's second advent. I know none more calculated to draw us from the world, and to make us single-eyed, wholehearted, and joyful Christians. But alas, how few believers live like men who wait for their Master's return! Who, that narrowly observes the ways of many believers, would ever think that they loved and longed for their Lord's appearing? Is it not true that there are many hearts among God's children which are not quite ready to receive Jesus? He would find the window barred—the door shut—the fires almost out—it would be a cold and comfortless reception. Oh, believing reader, it ought not so to be! We need more of a pilgrim's spirit—we ought to be ever looking for and hastening to our home. The day of the Lord's advent is the day of rest, the day of complete redemption, the day when the family of God shall at last be all gathered together. It is the day when we shall no longer walk by faith—but by sight—we shall see the land that is far off—we shall behold the King in His beauty. Surely we ought to be saying daily, "Come Lord Jesus, let Your kingdom come!" Oh, let us set Christ's second advent continually before our eyes! Let us say to ourselves every morning, "The Lord will soon return," and it will be good for our souls.

7. Lastly, if we want to grow in grace and have more hope, we must seek *more* ***diligence about means of grace***. It is vain to suppose that our hope is not dependent in any sense on the pains we take in the use of God's appointed ordinances. It is dependent, and that to a very great extent. God has wisely ordered it, so that lazy Christians seldom enjoy any assurance of their own acceptance. He tells us that we must labor, and strive, and work—to make our calling and election sure. Oh, that believers would remember this, and lay it to heart!

I suspect that many of God's people are very lazy in their manner of using means. They know little of David's spirit, when he said, "My soul longs and faints for the courts of the house of my God." I doubt whether there is much private prayer before and after sermons. Yet, remember, hearing alone is not everything—when all is said in the pulpit, only half the work is done. I doubt whether the Bible is as much read as it should be. Nothing in my own short experience has surprised me so much as the 'contented ignorance of Scripture' which prevails among believers. I doubt whether private prayer is often made a business of as it should be. We are often satisfied to get up from our knees without having really seen or heard anything of God and His Christ. And all this is wrong. It is the diligent soul that enjoys lively hope.

Reader let us lay to heart the things that I have mentioned. Let us resolve, by God's help, to set them before us continually, to pray for them, strive after them, and endeavor to attain them.

This is the way to be *useful Christians*. **The world knows little of Christ, beyond what it sees of Him in His people.** Oh, what plain clearly written epistles they ought to be! **A holy believer is a walking sermon. He preaches far more than a minister does, for he preaches all the week round**, shaming the unconverted, sharpening the converted, showing to all what grace can do. Such an one does good indeed by his life, and after death what great broad evidences he leaves behind him! We carry him to the grave without one unpleasant doubt! Oh, the value and the power of a growing Christian! The Lord make you and me such!

This is the way to be *happy Christians*. Happiness is the gift of God—but that there is the closest connection between full following of God and full happiness, let no man for an instant doubt. A hopeful growing believer has the witness within himself. He walks in the full light of the sun, and therefore he generally feels bright and warm. He does not quench the Spirit by continual inconsistencies, and so the fire within him seldom burns low. He has great peace, because he really loves God's law, and all who see him are obliged to allow that it is a privilege—and not a bondage—to be a Christian. **Oh the comfort of a tender conscience, a godly jealousy, a close walk with God—a heavenly frame of mind!** The Lord make us all of such a spirit.

And now, dear readers of every class to whom I have spoken, I heartily pray God to bless these pages to your souls. Whether you are one of those for whom *I fear*—whether you are one of those about whom *I doubt*—whether you are one of those whom *I look at with hope*—my heart's desire and prayer is, that you may lay down this book a wiser and better man than when you took it up.

We live in strange times. The world seems getting old and shaking. The shadows are long drawn. The evening appears to be coming on. The night will soon be upon us, when no man can work. Oh, that every reader of these pages would turn in upon himself while it

is called today, and consider his own ways. Oh, that each would ask himself the questions—Where am I? What am I? Where am I going? What will be the end of my present course? What is the hope of my soul?

Reader, once more I ask you not to despise my question. Think of it—consider it—pray over it. Oh, that it may take firm hold of your heart, and never leave you! Oh, that it may be to your soul as life from the dead! **Time** is fast ebbing away! **Life** is a vast uncertainty! **Death** is drawing nearer and nearer! **Judgment** is sure to come! Reader, *where are you? Where are you in the sight of God?*

I remain, your affectionate friend,
J. C. Ryle

Are You Regenerate?

by J. C. Ryle

Reader,
I wish to speak to you about Regeneration, or being born again.

The subject is a most important one at any time. Those words of our Lord Jesus Christ to Nicodemus are very solemn, "Unless a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John 3:3.) The world has gone through many changes since those words were spoken. Eighteen hundred years have passed away. Empires and kingdoms have risen and fallen. Great men and wise men have lived, labored, written, and died. But there stands the rule of the Lord Jesus unaltered and unchanged. And there it will stand, until heaven and earth shall pass away—"Unless a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

But the subject is one which is doubly important in the present day. Things have happened which have drawn special attention to it. Men's minds are full of it, and men's eyes are fixed on it. Regeneration is discussed in newspapers. Regeneration is talked of in private society. Regeneration is argued about in courts of law. Surely it is a time when every true Christian should examine himself upon the subject, and make sure that his views are sound. It is a time when we should not halt between two opinions. We should try to know what we hold. We should be ready to give a reason for our belief. When the truth is assailed, those who love truth should grasp it more firmly than ever. Oh, for a greater spirit of decision throughout the land! Oh, for a more hearty determination to be always on the Lord's side!

Reader, I invite you to listen to me, while I try to bring this disputed question before you. I feel deeply that I can tell you nothing new. I know I can say nothing which has not been better said by better men than myself. But every additional witness may be of use in a disputed cause. And if I can only throw a little Scripture light on the subject of Regeneration, and make it plain to plain readers of the Bible, I shall thank God, and be abundantly satisfied. What are the opinions of men to you or me? He who judges us is the Lord! One point has to be ascertained, and only one. "What do the Scripture of truth say?"

Now I propose to attempt three things—

1. Firstly, to explain *what Regeneration, or being born again, means.*

II. Secondly, to show the *necessity of Regeneration*.

III. Thirdly, to point out *the marks and evidences of Regeneration*.

If the Lord God shall enable me to make these three points clear to you, I believe I shall have done your soul a great service.

I. Let me then, first of all, explain ***what Regeneration, or being born again, means.***

Regeneration means, that change of heart and nature which a man goes through when he becomes a true Christian.

I think there can be no question that there is an immense difference among those who profess and call themselves Christians. Beyond all dispute, there are always two classes in the outward Church—the class of those who are Christians in name and form only, and the class of those who are Christians in deed and in truth. All were not Israel who were called Israel, and all are not Christians who are called Christians. "In the visible Church," says an article of the Church of England, "the evil be ever mingled with the good."

Some, as the Thirty-nine Articles say, are "wicked and void of a lively faith." Others, as another article says, "are made like the image of God's only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, and walk piously in good works." Some worship God as a mere form—and some in spirit and in truth. Some give their hearts to God—and some give them to the world. Some believe the Bible, and live as if they believed it—others do not. Some feel their sins, and mourn over them—others do not. Some love Christ, trust in Him, and serve Him—others do not. In short, as Scripture says, some walk in the narrow way—some in the broad way; some are the good fish of the Gospel net—some are the bad fish; some are the wheat in Christ's field—some are the tares.

I think no man with his eyes open can fail to see all this, both in the Bible, and in the world around him. Whatever he may think about the subject I am writing of, he cannot possibly deny that this difference exists.

Now what is the explanation of the difference? I answer unhesitatingly— Regeneration, or being born again. I answer, that true Christians are what they are, because they are Regenerate; and formal Christians are what they are, because they are not Regenerate. The heart of the true Christian has been changed. The heart of the Christian in name only, has not been changed. The change of heart makes the whole difference.

This change of heart is spoken of continually in the Bible, under various emblems and figures—

Ezekiel calls it, "a taking away the stony heart, and giving an heart of flesh;"—"a giving a new heart, and putting within us a new spirit." (Ezek. 11:19; 36:26.)

The apostle John sometimes calls it, being "born of God," sometimes, being "born again," sometimes, being "born of the Spirit." (John 1:13; 3:3-6.)

The apostle Peter, in the Acts, calls it "repenting and being converted." (Acts3:19.)

The Epistle to the Romans speaks of it as a "being alive from the dead." (Rom. 6:13.)

The second Epistle to the Corinthians calls it "being a new creature—old things have passed away, and all things become new." (2 Cor. 5:17.)

The Epistle to the Ephesians speaks of it as a resurrection together with Christ—"You has He quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins" (Ephes. 2:1); as "a putting off the old man, which is corrupt—being renewed in the spirit of our minds—and putting on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." (Ephes. 4:22, 24.)

The Epistle to the Colossians calls it a "putting off the old man with his deeds, and putting on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him." (Coloss. 3:9, 10.)

The Epistle to Titus calls it, "the washing of Regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit." (Titus 3:5.)

The first Epistle of Peter speaks of it as "a being called out of darkness into God's marvelous light." (1 Peter 2:9.) And the second Epistle as "being made partakers of the divine nature." (2 Peter 1:4.)

The first Epistle of John calls it a "passing from death to life." (1 John 3:14.)

All these expressions come to the same thing in the end. They are all the same truths only viewed from different sides. And all have one and the same meaning. They describe a great radical change of heart and nature—a thorough alteration and transformation of the whole inner man—a participation in the resurrection life of Christ—or, to borrow the words of the Church of England Catechism, "a death unto sin and a new birth unto righteousness."

This change of heart in a true Christian is so complete, that no word could be chosen more fitting to express it than that word, "Regeneration," or "new birth." Doubtless it is no outward, bodily alteration—but undoubtedly it is an entire alteration of the inner man. It adds no new faculties to a man's mind—but it certainly gives an entirely new bent and bias to all his old ones. His will is so new, his tastes so new, his opinions so now, his views of sin, the world, the Bible, and Christ so new, that he is to all intents and purposes a new man. The change seems to bring a new being into existence. It may well be called being *born again*.

This change is *not always given to believers at the same time in their lives.* A vast multitude of people it is to be feared, go down to the grave without having been born again at all.

This change of heart *does not always begin in the same way.* With some, like the apostle Paul, and the jailor at Philippi, it is a sudden and violent change, attended with much distress of mind. With others, like Lydia of Thyatira, it is more gentle and gradual—their winter becomes spring almost without their knowing how. With some the change is brought about by the Spirit working through afflictions or providential visitations. With others, and probably the greater number of true Christians, the Word of God, preached or written, is the means of effecting it.*

* "The preaching of the Word is the great means which God has appointed for Regeneration—'faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.' (Rom. 10:17.) When God first created man, it is said that 'He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life,' but when God new creates man, He breathes into his ears. This is the Word that raises the dead, calling them out of the grave—this is that Word that opens the eyes of the blind, that turns the heart of the disobedient and rebellious. And though wicked and profane men scoff at preaching, and count all ministers' words, and God's words too—but so much wind, yet they are such wind, believe it, as is able to tear rocks and rend mountains; such winds, as if ever they are saved, must shake and overturn the foundations of all their carnal confidence and presumption. Be exhorted, therefore, more to prize and more to frequent the preaching of the Word."—*Hopkins*. 1670.

This change is one which *can only be known and discerned by its effects.* Its beginnings are a hidden and secret thing. We cannot see them. Our Lord Jesus Christ tells us this most plainly—"The wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound thereof—but cannot tell whence it comes or where it goes; so is everyone that is born of the Spirit." (John 3:8.) Would you know if you are Regenerate? You must try the question, by examining what you know of the effects of Regeneration. Those effects are always the same. The ways by which true Christians are led, in passing through their great change, are certainly various. But the state of heart and soul into which they are brought at last, is always the same. Ask them what they think of sin, Christ, holiness, the world, the Bible, and prayer, and you will find them all of one mind.

This change is *one which no man can give to himself, nor yet to another.* It would be as reasonable to expect the dead to raise themselves, or to require an artist to give a marble statue life. The sons of God are "born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man—but of God." (John 1:13.) Sometimes the change is ascribed to God the Father—"The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has begotten us again unto a living hope." (1 Peter 1:3.) Sometimes it is ascribed to God the Son—"The Son quickens whom He will." (John 3:21.) "If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone that does righteousness is born of Him." (1 John 2:29.) Sometimes it is ascribed to the Spirit—and He, in fact, is the great agent by whom it is always effected—"That which is born of the Spirit is Spirit." (John 3:6.) But man has no power to work the change. It is something far, far beyond his reach. "The condition of man after the fall of Adam," says the tenth Article of the Church of England, "is such that he cannot turn and prepare himself by his own natural strength and good works, to faith and calling upon God." No minister on earth can convey grace to any one of his congregation at his discretion. He may preach as truly and faithfully as Paul or Apollos—but God must give the increase. (1

Cor. 3:6.) He may baptize with water in the name of the Trinity—but unless the Holy Spirit accompanies and blesses the ordinance, there is no death unto sin, and no new birth unto righteousness. Jesus alone, the great Head of the Church, can baptize with the Holy Spirit. Blessed and happy are they, who have the inward baptism, as well as the outward.*

* "The Scripture teaches, that no more than a child can beget itself, or a dead man quicken himself, or a nonentity create itself; no more can any carnal man regenerate himself, or work true saving grace in his own soul."—*Hopkins*. 1670.

"There are two kinds of baptism, and both necessary—the one interior, which is the cleansing of the heart, the drawing of the Father, the operation of the Holy Spirit—and this baptism is in man when he believes and trusts that Christ is the only method of his salvation."—*Hooper*. 1547.

"It is on all parts gladly confessed, that there may be, in divers cases, life by virtue of inward baptism, where outward is not found."—*Hooper*. 1592.

"There is a baptism of the Spirit as of water."—*Jeremy Taylor*. 1660.

Reader, I lay before you the foregoing account of Regeneration. I say it is that change of heart which is the distinguishing mark of a true Christian man—the invariable companion of a justifying faith in Christ—the inseparable consequence of vital union with him. and the root and beginning of inward sanctification. I ask you to ponder it well before you go any further. It is of the utmost importance that your views should be clear upon this point—*what Regeneration really is*.

I know well that many will not allow that Regeneration is what I have described it to be. They will think the statement I have made, by way of definition, much too strong. Some hold that Regeneration only means admission into a state of ecclesiastical privileges—being made a member of the Church—but does not mean a change of heart. Some tell us that a Regenerate man has a certain power within him which enables him to repent and believe if he thinks fit—but that he still needs a further change in order to make him a true Christian. Some say there is a difference between Regeneration and being born again. Others say there is a difference between being born again and conversion.

To all this I have one simple reply—and that is, *I can find no such Regeneration spoken of anywhere in the Bible*. A Regeneration which only means admission into a state of ecclesiastical privileges may be ancient and primitive, for anything I know. But something more than this is needed. A few plain texts of Scripture are needed; and these texts have yet to be found.

Such a notion of Regeneration is utterly inconsistent with that which John gives us in his first epistle. It renders it necessary to invent the awkward theory that there are two Regenerations, and is thus eminently calculated to confuse the minds of unlearned people, and introduce false doctrine. It is a notion which seems not to answer to the solemnity with which our Lord introduces the subject to Nicodemus. When He said, "Verily, verily, unless a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," did He only mean, unless a man be admitted to a state of ecclesiastical privilege? Surely He meant more than this. Such a Regeneration a man might have, like Simon Magus, and yet never be saved. Such a Regeneration He might never have, like the penitent thief, and yet see the kingdom of God. Surely He must have meant a change of heart. As to the notion that there is any distinction between being Regenerate and being born again, it is one which will not bear examination. It is the general opinion of all who know Greek, that the two expressions mean one and the same thing.

To me indeed there seems to be much confusion of ideas, and indistinctness of apprehension in men's minds on this simple point—what Regeneration really is—and all arising from not simply adhering to the Word of God. That a man is admitted into a state of great privilege when he is made a member of a pure Church of Christ, I do not for an instant deny. That he is in a far better and more advantageous position for his soul, than if he did not belong to the Church, I make no question. That a wide door is set open before his soul, which is not set before the poor heathen, I can most clearly see. *But I do not see that the Bible ever calls this Regeneration*. And I cannot find a single text in Scripture which warrants the assumption that it is so. It is very important in theology to distinguish things that differ. Church privileges are one thing. Regeneration is another. I, for one, dare not confound them.

I am quite aware that great and good men have clung to that low view of Regeneration, to which I have adverted.* But when a doctrine of the everlasting Gospel is at stake, I can call no man master. The words of the old philosopher are never to be forgotten—"I love Plato, I love Socrates—but I love truth better than either." I say unhesitatingly, that those who hold the view that there are two Regenerations, can bring forward no plain text in proof of it. I firmly believe that no plain reader of the Bible only, would ever find this view there for himself; and that goes very far to make me suspect it is an idea of man's invention. The only Regeneration that I can see in Scripture is, not a change of *state*—but a change of *heart*. That is the view, I once more assert, which the Church Catechism takes when it speaks of the "death unto sin, and new birth unto righteousness," and on that view I take my stand.

* For instance, Bishop Davenant and Bishop Hopkins frequently speak of "a sacramental Regeneration,' when they are handling the subject of baptism, as a thing entirely distinct from spiritual Regeneration. The general tenor of their writings is to speak of the godly as the regenerate, and the ungodly as the unregenerate. But with every feeling of respect for two such good men, the question yet remains—What Scripture warrant have we for saying there are two Regenerations? I answer unhesitatingly—We have none at all.

Reader, the doctrine before you is one of vital importance. This is no matter of names, and words, and forms, about which I am writing, and you are reading. It is a thing that you and I must feel and know by experience, each for himself, if we are to be saved. Try, I beseech you, to become acquainted with it. Let not the din and smoke of controversy draw off your attention from your own heart. Is that heart changed? Alas, it is poor work to wrangle, and argue, and dispute about Regeneration, if after all we know nothing about it within.

Reader, Regeneration, or new birth, is the distinguishing mark of every true Christian. Now just consider what I say. *Are you Regenerate, or are you not?*

II. Let me show you, in the second place, ***the NECESSITY there is for our being Regenerated, or born again.***

That there is such a necessity is most plain from our Lord Jesus Christ's words in the third chapter of John's Gospel. Nothing can be

more clear and positive than His language to Nicodemus—"Unless a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." "Marvel not that I said unto you, You must be born again." (John 3:7.)

The reason of this necessity is the exceeding sinfulness and corruption of our natural hearts. The words of Paul to the Corinthians are literally accurate—"The natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him." (1 Cor. 2:14.) Just as rivers flow downward, and sparks fly upward, and stones fall to the ground, so does a man's heart naturally incline to what is evil. We love our soul's enemies—we dislike our soul's friends. We call good evil, and we call evil good. We take pleasure in ungodliness, we take no pleasure in Christ. We not only commit sin—but we also love sin. We not only need to be cleansed from the guilt of sin—but we also need to be delivered from its power. The natural tone, bias, and current, of our minds, must be completely altered. The image of God, which sin has blotted out, must be restored. The disorder and confusion which reigns within us must be put down. The first things must no longer be last, and the last first. The Spirit must let in the light on our hearts, put everything in its right place, and create all things new.

It ought always to be remembered that there are two distinct things which the Lord Jesus Christ does for every sinner whom He undertakes to save. He washes him from his sins in His own blood, and gives him a free pardon—*this is his justification*. He puts the Holy Spirit into his heart, and makes him an entire new man—*this is his Regeneration*.

The two things are *both absolutely necessary to salvation*. The change of heart is as necessary as the pardon; and the pardon is as necessary as the change. Without the pardon we have no right or title to heaven. Without the change we would not be fit and ready to enjoy heaven, even if we got there.

The two things are *never separate*. They are never found apart. Every justified man is also a Regenerate man, and every Regenerate man is also a justified man. When the Lord Jesus Christ gives a man remission of sins, He also gives him repentance. When He grants peace with God, He also grants power to become a son of God. There are two great standing maxims of the glorious Gospel, which ought never to be forgotten. One is, "He who believes not shall be damned." (Mark 16:16.) The other is, "If any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." (Rom. 8:9.)

Reader, the man who denies the universal necessity of Regeneration, can know very little of the heart's corruption. He is blind indeed who fancies that pardon is all we need in order to get to heaven, and does not see that pardon without a change of heart would be a useless gift. Blessed be God that both are freely offered to us in Christ's Gospel, and that Jesus is able and willing to give the one as well as the other.

Surely you must be aware that the vast majority of people in the world *see nothing, feel nothing, and know nothing in religion as they ought*. How and why is this, is not the present question. I only put it to your conscience—is it not the fact?

Tell them of the **sinfulness** of many things which they are doing continually—and what is generally the reply? "They see no harm."

Tell them of the awful **peril** in which their souls are—of the shortness of time—the nearness of eternity—the uncertainty of life—the reality of judgment. "They feel no danger."

Tell them of their need of a **Savior**—mighty, loving, and divine, and of the impossibility of being saved from hell, except by faith in Him. It all falls flat and dead on their ears. "They see no such great barrier between themselves and heaven."

Tell them of **holiness**, and the high standard of living which the Bible requires. They cannot comprehend the need of such strictness. "They see no use in being so very good."

There are thousands and tens of thousands of such people on every side of us. They will hear these things all their lives. They will even attend the ministry of the most striking preachers, and listen to the most powerful appeals to their consciences. And yet, when you come to visit them on their deathbeds, they are like men and women who never heard these things at all. They know nothing of the leading doctrines of the Gospel by experience. They can render no reason whatever of their own hope.

And why is all this? What is the explanation—what is the cause of such a state of things? It all comes from this—that man naturally has no sense of spiritual things. In vain the sun of righteousness shines before him—the eyes of his soul are blind, and cannot see. In vain the music of Christ's invitations sounds around him—the ears of his soul are deaf and cannot hear it. In vain the wrath of God against sin is set forth—the perceptions of his soul are stopped up—like the sleeping traveler, he does not perceive the coming storm. In vain the bread and water of life are offered to him—his soul is neither hungry for the one, nor thirsty for the other. In vain he is advised to flee to the Great Physician—his soul is unconscious of its disease—why should he go? In vain you put a price into his hand to buy wisdom—the mind of his soul wanders; he is like the lunatic who calls straws a crown, and dust diamonds—he says, "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing." Ah, reader, there is nothing so sad as the utter corruption of our nature! There is nothing so painful as the anatomy of a dead soul.

Now what does such a man need? He needs to be born again, and made a new creature. He needs a complete putting off the old man, and a complete putting on the new. We do not live our natural life until we are born into the world; and we do not live our spiritual life until we are born of the Spirit.

But, reader, you must furthermore be aware that the vast majority of people *are utterly unfit to enjoy heaven in their present state*. I lay it before you as a great fact. Is it not so?

Look at the masses of men and women gathered together in our cities and towns, and observe them well. They are all dying creatures—all immortal beings—all going to the judgment seat of Christ—all certain to live forever in heaven or in hell. But where is the slightest evidence that most of them are in the least degree fit and ready for heaven?

Look at the greater part of those who are called Christians, in every part throughout the land. Take any parish you please in town or country. Take that which you know best. What are the tastes and pleasures of the majority of people who live there? What do they like best, when they have a choice? What do they enjoy most, when they can have their own way? Observe the manner in which they spend their Sundays. Mark how little delight they seem to feel in the Bible and prayer. Take notice of the low and earthly notions of

pleasure and happiness, which everywhere prevail, among young and old, among rich and poor. Mark well these things, and then think quietly over this question—**"What would these people do in heaven?"**

You and I, it may be said, know little about heaven. Our notions of heaven may be very dim and indistinct. But at all events, I suppose we are agreed in thinking that heaven is a very holy place—that God is there—and Christ is there—and saints and angels are there—that sin is not there in any shape—and that nothing is said, thought, or done, which God does not like. Only let this be granted, and then I think *there can be no doubt the great majority of professing Christians are as little fit for heaven as a bird for swimming beneath the sea, or a fish for living upon dry land.*

And what is it they need in order to make them fit to enjoy heaven? They need to be Regenerated or born again. It is not a little changing and outward amendment they require. It is not merely the putting a restraint on raging passions, and the quieting of unruly affections. All this is not enough. Old age—the lack of opportunity for indulgence—the fear of man, may produce all this. *The tiger is still a tiger, even when he is chained; and the serpent is still a serpent, even when he lies motionless and coiled up.* The alteration needed is far greater and deeper. They must have a new nature put within them. They must be made new creatures. The fountain-head must be purified. The root must be set right. Each one needs a new heart and a new will. The change required is not that of the snake, when he casts his skin and yet remains a reptile still. It is the change of the caterpillar, when he dies and his crawling life ceases —but from his body rises the butterfly—a new animal, with a new nature. All this, and nothing less, is required.

The plain truth is, the vast proportion of professing Christians in the churches have nothing whatever of Christianity, except the name. The reality of Christianity, the graces, the experience, the faith, the hopes, the life, the conflict, the tastes, the hungering and thirsting after righteousness—all these are things of which they know nothing at all. They need to be converted as truly as any among the heathen to whom Paul preached, and to be turned from idols, and renewed in the spirit of their minds, as really, if not as literally. And one main part of the message which should be continually delivered to the greater portion of every congregation on earth, is this —"You must be born again." I write this down deliberately. I know it will sound dreadful and uncharitable in many ears. But I ask anyone to take the New Testament in his hand and see what it says is Christianity, and compare that with the ways of professing Christians, and then deny the truth of what I have written, if he can.

And now let everyone who reads these pages remember this grand principle of Scriptural religion—**"No salvation without Regeneration—no spiritual life without a new birth—no heaven without a new heart."**

Think not for a moment that the subject of this tract is a mere matter of controversy—an empty question for learned men to argue about—but not one that concerns you. Away with such an idea forever! It concerns you deeply. It touches your own eternal interests. It is a thing that you must know for yourself, feel for yourself, and experience for yourself, if you would ever be saved. **No man, woman, or child, will ever enter heaven without having been born again.***

* "Make sure to yourselves this great change. It is no notion that I have now preached unto you. Your natures and your lives must be changed, or, believe it, you will be found at the last day under the wrath of God. For God will not change or alter the Word that is gone out of His mouth. He has said it—Christ, who is the truth and Word of God, has pronounced it—that without the new birth, or Regeneration, no man shall inherit the kingdom of God."—*Hopkins.* 1670.

And think not for one moment that this Regeneration is a change which people may go through after they are dead, though they never went through it while they were alive. Away with such a notion forever! Now or never is the only time to be saved. Now, in this world of toil and labor—of money—getting and business—now you must be prepared for heaven, if you are ever to be prepared at all. Now is the only time to be justified, now the only time to be sanctified, and now the only time to be born again. So sure as the Bible is true, the man who dies without these three things, will only rise again at the last day to be lost forever.

You may be saved, and reach heaven without many things which men reckon of great importance—without riches, without learning, without books, without worldly comforts, without health, without house, without land, without friends—but *without Regeneration you will never be saved at all.* Without your natural birth you would never have lived, and moved on earth; without a new birth you will never live and move in heaven. I bless God that the saints in glory will be a multitude that no man can number. I comfort myself with the thought that, after all, there will be "a great multitude" in heaven. But this I know and am persuaded of from God's Word, that of all who reach heaven, there will not be one single individual who has not been born again.*

* "Regeneration, or the new birth, is of absolute necessity unto eternal life. There is no other change simply necessary—but only this. If you are poor, you may so continue, and yet be saved. If you are despised, you may so continue, and yet be saved. If you are unlearned, you may so continue, and yet be saved. Only one change is necessary. If you are wicked and ungodly and continued so, Christ, who has the keys of heaven, who shuts and no man opens, has Himself doomed you, that you shall never enter into the kingdom of God."—*Hopkins.* 1670.

"Are you born again?" I say to everyone whose eye is upon this page. Once more I repeat what I have already said, "No salvation without a new birth."

III. Let me, in the third place, point out ***the MARKS of being Regenerate, or born again.***

It is a most important thing to have clear and distinct views on this part of the subject we are considering. You have seen what Regeneration is, and why it is necessary to salvation. The next step is to find out the signs and evidences by which a man may know whether he is born again or not—whether his heart has been changed by the Holy Spirit, or whether his change is yet to come.

Now these signs and evidences are laid down plainly for us in Scripture. God has not left us in ignorance on this point. He foresaw how some would torture themselves with doubts and questionings, and would never believe it was well with their souls. He foresaw how others would take it for granted they were Regenerate who had no right to do so at all. He has therefore mercifully provided us with a test and gauge of our spiritual condition, in the First Epistle general of John. There He has written for our learning, what the Regenerate man is, and what the Regenerate man does—his ways, his habits, his manner of life, his faith, his experience. Everyone who wishes to possess the key to a right understanding of this subject, should thoroughly study this First Epistle of John.

Reader, I invite your particular attention to these marks and evidences of Regeneration, while I try to set them before you in order. Forget everything else in this volume, if you will—but do not forget this part of it. I might easily mention other evidences besides those I am about to mention. But I will not do so. I would rather confine myself to the First Epistle of John, because of the peculiar explicitness of its statements about the man that is born of God. He that has an ear, let him hear what the beloved Apostle says about the marks of Regeneration.

1. First of all, John says, "No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God." "We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning." (1 John 3:9; 5:18.)

A Regenerate man *does not commit sin as a habit*. He no longer sins with his heart and will, and whole inclination, as an unregenerate man does. There was probably a time when he did not think whether his actions were sinful or not, and never felt grieved after doing evil. There was no quarrel between him and sin—they were friends. Now he hates sin, flees from it, fights against it, counts it his greatest plague, groans under the burden of its presence, mourns when he falls under its influence, and longs to be delivered from it altogether. In one word, sin no longer pleases him, nor is even a matter of indifference—it has become the abominable thing which he hates. He cannot prevent it dwelling within him. "If he said he had no sin, there would be no truth in him" (1 John 1:8)—but he can say that he keenly abhors it, and the great desire of his soul is not to commit sin at all. He cannot prevent bad thoughts arising within him, and shortcomings, omissions, and defects appearing, both in his words and actions. He knows, as James says, that "In many things we offend all." (James 3:2.) But he can say truly, and as in the sight of God, that these things are a daily grief and sorrow to him, and that his whole nature does not consent unto them, as that of the unregenerate man does. Reader, I place this mark before you. What would the Apostle say about you? Are you born of God?*

* "The interpretation of this place that I judge to be the most natural and unforced, is this—'No one born of God makes a practice of sinning;' that is, he does not sin in that malignant manner in which the children of the devil do—he does not make a trade of sin, nor live in the constant and allowed practice of it. There is a great difference between regenerate and unregenerate people in the very sins that they commit. All indeed sin—but a child of God cannot sin—that is, though he does sin, yet he cannot sin after such a manner as wicked and unregenerate men do."—*Hopkins*. 1670.

2. Secondly. John says, "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." (1 John 5:1.)

A Regenerate man believes that Jesus Christ is the only Savior by whom his soul can be pardoned and redeemed; that He is the divine person appointed and anointed by God the Father for this very purpose, and that beside Him there is no Savior at all. In himself he sees nothing but unworthiness—but in Christ he sees ground for the fullest confidence, and trusting in Him, he believes that his sins are all forgiven and his iniquities all put away. He believes that for the sake of Christ's finished work and death upon the cross, he is reckoned righteous in God's sight, and may look forward to death and judgment without alarm. He may have his doubts and fears. He may sometimes tell you he feels as if he had no faith at all. But ask him whether he is willing to trust in anything instead of Christ, and see what he will say. Ask him whether he will rest his hopes of eternal life on his own goodness, his own amendments, his prayers, his minister, his doings in Church and out of Church, either in whole or in part, and see what he will reply. Ask him whether he will give up Christ, and place his confidence in any other way of salvation. Depend upon it he would say, that though he does feel weak and bad, he would not give up Christ for all the world. Depend upon it—he would say he found a preciousness in Christ, a suitableness to his own soul in Christ, that he found no where else, and that he must cling to Him.

Reader, I place this mark also before you. What would the Apostle say about you? Are you born of God?

3. Thirdly. John says, "Everyone that does righteousness is born of Him." (1 John 2:29.)

The Regenerate man is a *holy man*. He endeavors to live according to God's will, to do the things that please God, to avoid the things that God hates. His aim and desire is to love God with heart and soul, and mind and strength, and to love his neighbor as himself. His wish is to be continually looking to Christ as his example as well as his Savior, and to show himself Christ's friend by doing whatever Christ commands. No doubt he is not perfect. None will tell you that sooner than himself. He groans under the burden of indwelling corruption cleaving to him. He finds an evil principle within him constantly warring against grace, and trying to draw him away from God. But he does not consent to it, though he cannot prevent its presence. In spite of all short-comings, the average bent and bias of his ways is holy—his doings holy—his tastes holy—and his habits holy. In spite of all his swerving and turning aside, like a ship going against a contrary wind, the general course of his life is in one direction—toward God and for God. And though he may sometimes feel so low that he questions whether he is a Christian at all, in his calmer moments he will generally be able to say, with old John Newton, "I am not what I ought to be, I am not what I want to be, I am not what I hope to be in another world—but still I am not what I once used to be, and by the grace of God I am what I am."*

* "Let none conclude that they have no grace, because they have many imperfections in their obedience. Your grace may be very weak and imperfect, and yet you may be truly born again to God, and be a genuine son and heir of heaven."—*Hopkins*. 1670.

Reader, I place this mark also before you. What would the Apostle say about you? Are you born of God?

4. Fourthly. John says, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." (1 John 3:14.)

A Regenerate man *has a special LOVE for all true disciples of Christ*. Like his Father in heaven, he loves all men with a genuine **general** love—but he has a **special** love for those who are of one mind with himself. Like his Lord and Savior, he loves the worst of sinners, and could weep over them—but he has a peculiar love for those who are believers. He is never so much at home as when he is in their company. He is never so happy as when he is among the saints and the excellent of the earth. Others may value learning, or cleverness, or agreeableness, or riches, or rank—in the society they choose. The Regenerate man values grace. Those who have most grace, and are most like Christ, are those he loves most. He feels that they are members of the same family with himself, his brethren, his sisters, children of the same Father. He feels that they are fellow-soldiers fighting under the same captain, warring against the same enemy. He feels that they are his fellow-travelers, journeying along the same road, tried by the same difficulties, and soon about to rest with him in the same eternal home. He understands them, and they understand him. There is a kind of spiritual brotherhood between them. He and they may be very different in many ways—in rank, in station, in wealth. What does it matter?

They are Jesus Christ's people. They are his Father's sons and daughters. Then he cannot help loving them.

Reader, I place this mark also before you. What would the Apostle say about you? Are you born of God?

5. Fifthly. John says, "Whoever is born of God overcomes the world." (1 John 5:4.)

A Regenerate man *does not make the WORLD'S opinion his rule of right and wrong*. He goes against the stream of the world's ways, notions, and customs. "What will men say?" is no longer a turning point with him. He overcomes the **love** of the world. He finds no pleasure in things which most around him call happiness. He cannot enjoy their enjoyments—they weary him; they appear to him vain, unprofitable, and unworthy of an immortal being. He overcomes the **fear** of the world. He is content to do many things which all around him think unnecessary, to say the least. They find fault with him—it does not move him. They ridicule him—he does not give way. He loves the praise of God more than the praise of man. He fears offending Him more than giving offence to man. He has counted the cost. He has taken his stand. It is a small thing with him now whether he is blamed or praised. His eye is upon Him who is invisible. He is resolved to follow Jesus wherever he goes. It may be necessary in this following to come out from the world and be separate. The Regenerate man will not shrink from doing so. Tell him that he is unlike other people, that his views are not the views of society generally, and that he is making himself singular and peculiar—you will not shake him. He is no longer the servant of fashion and custom. To please the world is quite a secondary consideration with him. His first aim is to please God.

Reader, I place this mark also before you. What would the Apostle say about you? Are you born of God?

6. Sixthly. John says, "He who was born of God keeps himself." (1 John 5:18.)

A Regenerate man is *very careful of his own soul.* He endeavors not only to keep clear of sin—but also to keep clear of everything which may lead to it. He is careful about the company he keeps. He feels that evil communications corrupt the heart, and that evil is far more catching than good, just as disease is more infectious than health. He is careful about the employment of his time—his chief desire about it is to spend it profitably. He is careful about the books he reads—he fears getting his mind poisoned by mischievous writings. He is careful about the friendships he forms—it is not enough for him that people are kind, and amiable, and good-natured—all this is very well—but will they do good to his soul? He is careful over his own daily habits and behavior—he tries to recollect that his own heart is deceitful, and that the world is full of wickedness, that the devil is always laboring to do him harm, and therefore he would sincerely be always on his guard. He desires to live like a soldier in an enemy's country, to wear his armor continually, and to be prepared for temptation. He finds by experience that his soul is ever among enemies, and he studies to be a watchful, humble, prayerful man.

Reader, I place this mark also before you. What would the Apostle say of you? Are you born of God?

Such are the six great marks of Regeneration, which God has given for our learning. Let everyone who has gone so far with me, read them over with attention, and lay them to heart. I believe they were written with the view to settle the great question of the present day, and intended to prevent disputes. Once more then, I ask the reader to mark and consider them.

I know there is a vast difference in the depth and distinctness of these marks among those who are Regenerate. In some people they are faint, dim, feeble, and hardly to be discerned. You almost need a microscope to make them out. In others they are bold, sharp, clear, plain, and unmistakable, so that he who runs may read them. Some of these marks are more visible in some people, and others are more visible in others. It seldom happens that all are equally manifest in one and the same soul. All this I am quite ready to allow.

But still, after every allowance, here we find boldly painted the six marks of being born of God. Here are certain positive things laid down by John, as parts of the Regenerate man's character, as plainly and distinctly as the features of a man's face. Here is an inspired Apostle writing one of the last general Epistles to the Church of Christ, telling us that a man born of God—
does not commit sin;
believes that Jesus is the Christ;
does righteousness;
loves the brethren;
overcomes the world;
and keeps himself.

And more than once in the very same Epistle when these marks are mentioned, the Apostle tells us that he who has not this or that mark, is "not of God." I ask the reader to observe all this.

Now what shall we say to these things? What they can say who hold that Regeneration is only an admission to outward Church privileges, I am sure I do not know. For myself I say boldly, I can only come to one conclusion. That conclusion is, that those people only are regenerate who have these six marks about them, and that all men and women who have not these marks, are not regenerate, are not born again. And I firmly believe that this is the conclusion to which the Apostle wished us to come.

Reader, *have you these marks?* I know not what your opinions may be on this much-disputed subject of Regeneration. I know not on which side you may rank yourself. But once for all I warn you, if you find nothing in yourself answering to the marks I have been speaking of, you have reason indeed to be afraid. Without these marks it is vain to fancy you are Scripturally regenerate. The witness of the Apostle John is clear and express, that you are not. There must be a certain family likeness between God and His children. Without it you are none of His. There must be some visible evidence of the Spirit being within you, as plain as the stamp upon gold and silver, however small. Without this evidence you are only boasting of a false faith. Show me your faith without your works, said the Apostle James, when he wrote against those who are content with a dead faith. Show me your Regeneration without its fruits, is an argument that ought to be pressed home on many a conscience in the present day.

Reader, ***if you have NOT these marks***, awake to a sense of your danger. Arise from your sleep of indifference and unconcern. Know the immense peril of hell and eternal misery in which you stand. Begin to use diligently every means by which God is ordinarily pleased to give grace to men's hearts, when they have not received it in their youth. Be diligent in hearing the Gospel preached. Be diligent in reading the Bible. Be diligent, above all, in prayer to the Lord Jesus Christ for the gift of the Holy Spirit.

If you take this course, I have every hope for you. None ever sought the Lord Jesus Christ in simplicity and sincerity—and sought in vain.

If, on the contrary, you refuse to take this course, and will continue as you are, I have little hope for you, and many fears. If the Bible be true, you are not yet born again. You will not use the most likely means to obtain this mighty blessing. What can I say but this, "the Lord have mercy upon your soul!"

Reader, ***if you HAVE these marks*** I have been speaking of, be advised, and strive every year to make them more clear and plain. Let your repentance be a growing habit—your faith an increasing faith—your holiness a progressive holiness—your victory over the world a more decided victory—your love to the brethren a more hearty love—your watchfulness over yourself a more jealous watchfulness. Take this advice, and you will never repent of it. This is the way to be useful and happy in your religion. This is the way to put to silence the opposition of the enemies of truth. Let others, if they will, have Regeneration on their tongues, and nowhere else. Let it be your care to have it shining forth in your life, and to feel it in your heart.

Reader, I commend what I have been saying to your serious consideration. I believe that I have told you nothing but what is God's truth. You live in a day of gross darkness on the subject of Regeneration. Thousands are darkening God's counsel by confounding baptism and Regeneration. Beware of this. Keep the two subjects separate in your mind. Get clear views about Regeneration first of all, and then you are not likely to fall into mistakes about baptism. And when you have got clear views hold them fast—and never let them go!

Are You an Heir?

by J. C. Ryle

"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are children of God. For you didn't receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God; and if children, then heirs; **heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ**; if indeed we suffer with him, that we may also be glorified with him." (Romans 8:14-17)

As soon as you have read the verses of Scripture before your eyes, I invite you to consider a very solemn question—*Are you an heir of glory?*

Mark well what I am asking. I am not speaking of matters which only concern the rich, the great, and the noble. I do not ask whether you are an heir to money or lands. I only ask whether you are an heir of glory.

The inheritance I speak of is **the only inheritance *really worth having*.** All others are unsatisfying and disappointing. They bring with them many cares. They cannot cure an aching heart. They cannot lighten a heavy conscience. They cannot keep off family troubles. They cannot prevent sicknesses, bereavements, separations, and deaths. But there is no disappointment among the heirs of glory.

The inheritance I speak of is the **only inheritance *which can be kept forever*.** All others must be left in the hour of death, if they have not been taken away before. The owners of millions can carry nothing with them beyond the grave. But it is not so with the heirs of glory. Their inheritance is eternal.

The inheritance I speak of is **the only inheritance *which is within everybody's reach*.** Most men can never obtain riches and greatness, though they labor hard for them all their lives. But glory, honor, and eternal life, are offered to every man freely, who is willing to accept them on God's terms. "Whoever will," may be an heir of glory.

Reader, if you wish to have a portion of this inheritance, you must be a member of that one family on earth to which it belongs, and that is the family of all true Christians. You must become one of God's children on earth, if you desire to have glory in heaven. I write to persuade you to become a child of God this day, if you are not one already. I write to persuade you to make it sure work that you are one, if at present you have only a vague hope, and nothing more. None but true Christians are the children of God. None but the children of God are heirs of glory. Give me your attention, while I try to unfold to you these things, and to show you the lessons which the verses you have already read contain.

I. Let me show you *the relation of all true Christians to God. They are "sons of God."*

II. Let me show you *the special evidences of this relation*. True Christians are *"led by the Spirit."* They have *"the Spirit of adoption."* They have the *"witness of the Spirit."* They *"suffer with Christ."*

III. Let me show you *the privileges of this relation*. True Christians are *"heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ,"* and shall be *"glorified together" with Him*.

I. First let me show you ***the relation of all true Christians to God*. They are God's "SONS."**

I know no higher and more comfortable word that could have been chosen. To be servants of God—to be subjects, soldiers, disciples, friends—all these are excellent titles. But to be the **sons** of God, is a step higher still. What says the Scripture? "The servant abides not in the house for over—but the son abides ever." (John 8:35.)

To be son of the rich and noble in this world—to be son of the princes and kings of the earth—this is reckoned a privilege. But to be a son of the King of kings, and Lord of lords—to be a son of the High and Holy One, who inhabits eternity—this is something higher still. And yet this is the portion of every true Christian.

The son of an earthly parent looks naturally to his father for affection, maintenance, provision, and education. There is a home always open to him. There is a love which no bad conduct can completely extinguish. All these are things belonging even to the sonship of this world. Think then how great is the privilege of that poor sinner who can say of God, "He is my Father."

But HOW can sinful men like you and I become sons of God? When do they enter into this glorious relationship? We are not the sons of God by nature. We are not born so when we come into the world. No man has a natural right to look to God as his Father. It is a vile heresy to say that he has. Men are said to be born poets and painters—but men are never born sons of God. The Epistle to the Ephesians tells us, *"You were by nature children of wrath, even as others."* (Ephes. 2:3.) The Epistle of John says, *"the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil—whoever does not righteousness is not of God."* (1 John 3:10.) The Catechism of the Church of England wisely follows the doctrine of the Bible, and teaches us to say, "By nature born in sin, and children of wrath." Yes! we are all rather children of the devil, than children of God. Sin is indeed hereditary, and runs in the family of Adam. Grace is anything but hereditary, and holy men have not, as a matter of course, holy sons. How then, and when does this mighty change and translation come upon men? When and in what manner do sinners become the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty?

Men become sons of God in the day that the Spirit leads them to believe on Jesus Christ for salvation, and not before. What says the Epistle to the Galatians? *"You are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus."* (Gal. 3:36.) What says the Epistle to the Corinthians? *"Of him are you in Christ Jesus."* (1 Cor. 1:30.) What says the Gospel of John? *"As many as received Christ, to them gave the power (or privilege) to become the sons of God, even to those who believe on His name."* (John 1:12.) Faith unites the sinner to the Son of God, and makes him one of His members. Faith makes him one of those in whom the Father sees no spot, and is well pleased. Faith marries him to the beloved Son of God, and entitles him to be reckoned among the sons. Faith gives him fellowship with the Father and the Son. Faith grafts him into the Father's family, and opens up to him a room in the Father's house. Faith gives him life instead of death, and makes him instead of being a servant, a son. Show me a man who has this faith in Christ, and whatever be his Church, or denomination, I say that he is a son of God.

Reader, this is one of those points you should never forget. You and I know nothing of a man's sonship *until he believes*. No doubt the sons of God are foreknown and chosen from all eternity, and predestinated to adoption. (Ephes. 1:5.) But, remember, it is not until they are called in due time, and believe—it is not until then that you and I can be certain they are sons of God. It is not until they repent and believe, that the angels of God rejoice over them. The angels cannot read the book of God's election. They know not who are His hidden ones in the earth. They rejoice over no man until he believes. But when they see some poor sinner repenting and believing, then there is joy among them—joy that one more brand is plucked from the burning, and one more son and heir born again to the Father in heaven. But once more I say, you and I know nothing certain about a man's sonship to God *until he believes on Christ*.

Reader, I warn you to beware of the delusive notion, that all men and women are alike children of God, whether they have faith in Christ or not. It is a wild theory which many are clinging to in these days—but one which cannot be proved out of the Word of God. It is a perilous dream, with which many are trying to soothe themselves—but one from which there will be a fearful waking up at the last day.

That God, in a certain sense, is the universal Father of all mankind, I do not pretend to deny. He is the Great First Cause of all things. He is the Creator of all mankind, and in Him alone, all men, whether Christians or heathens, live and move, and have their being. All this is unquestionably true. In this sense Paul told the Athenians, a poet of their own had truly said, *"We are His offspring."* (Acts 17:28.) But this sonship gives no man a title to heaven. The sonship which we have by creation, is one which belongs to stones, trees, beasts, or even to the devils—as much as to us.

That God loves all mankind with a love of pity and compassion, I do not deny. His tender mercies are over all His works. He is not willing that any should perish—but that all should come to repentance. He has no pleasure in the death of him that dies. All this I admit to the full. In this sense our Lord Jesus tells us, *"God so loved the world, that he gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish—but have everlasting life."* (John 3:16.)

But that God is a reconciled and pardoning Father to any but the members of His Son Jesus Christ, and that any are members of Jesus Christ who do not believe on Him for salvation—this is a doctrine which I utterly deny. The holiness and justice of God are both against the doctrine. They make it impossible for sinful men to approach God, excepting through a mediator. They tell us that outside of Christ, God is a consuming fire. The whole system of the New Testament is against the doctrine. That system teaches that no man can claim interest in Christ, unless he will receive Him as his Mediator, and believe on Him as his Savior. Where there is no faith in Christ, it is presumptuous folly to say that a man may take comfort in God as His Father. *God is a reconciled Father to none but the members of Christ*.

It is nonsense to talk of the view I am now upholding as narrow-minded and harsh. The Gospel sets an open door before every man. Its promises are wide and full. Its invitations are earnest and tender. Its requirements are simple and clear. Only believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and whoever you are, you shall be saved. But to say that proud men, who will not bow their necks to the easy yoke of Christ, and worldly men, who are determined to have their own way and their sins—to say that such men have a right to claim an interest in Christ, and a right to call themselves sons of God, is absurdity indeed. God offers to be their Father—but He does it on certain distinct terms—they must draw near to Him through Christ. Christ offers to be their Savior—but in doing it He makes one simple requirement—they must commit their souls to Him, and give Him their hearts. They refuse the terms, and yet dare to call God their Father! They scorn the requirement, and yet dare to hope that Christ will save them! God is to be their Father—but on their own terms! Christ is to be their Savior—but on their conditions! What can be more unreasonable? What can be more proud? What can be more unholy than such a doctrine as this? Beware of it, reader, for it is a common doctrine in these latter days. Beware of it, for it is often speciously put forward, and sounds beautiful and charitable in the mouths of poets, novelists, sentimentalists, and tender-hearted women. Beware of it, unless you mean to throw aside your Bible altogether, and set up yourself to be wiser than God. Stand fast on the old Scriptural ground. *No sonship to God without Christ! No interest in Christ without faith!*

I wish there was not so much cause for giving warnings of this kind. I have reason to think they need to be given clearly and unmistakably. There is a school of theology rising up in this day, which appears to me most eminently calculated to promote infidelity, to help the devil, and to ruin souls. It comes to us like Joab to Amasa, with the highest professions of charity, liberality, and love. God is all mercy and love, according to this theology—His holiness and justice are completely left out of sight! Hell is never spoken of in this theology—its talk is all of heaven! Damnation is never mentioned—it is treated as an impossible thing—all men and women are to be saved! Faith, and the work of the Spirit, are refined away into nothing at all! Everybody who believes anything has faith! Everybody who thinks anything has the Spirit! Everybody is right! Nobody is wrong! Nobody is to blame for any action he may commit! It is the result of his position! It is the effect of circumstances! He is not accountable for his opinions, any more than for the color of his skin! He must be what he is! The Bible of course is a very imperfect book! It is old-fashioned! It is obsolete! We may believe just as much of it as we please, and no more! Reader, of all this theology, I warn you solemnly to beware. In spite of big swelling words about "liberality," and "charity," and "broad views," and "new lights," and "freedom from bigotry," and so forth, I do believe it to be a theology that leads to hell.

Facts are directly against the teachers of this theology. Let them climb to the tops of mountains, and mark the traces of Noah's flood. Let them go to the shores of the Dead Sea, and look down into its mysterious bitter waters. Let them observe the wandering Jews, scattered over the face of the world. And then let them tell us, if they dare, that God is so entirely a God of mercy and love, that he never does, and never will punish sin.

The conscience of man is directly against these teachers. Let them go to the bedside of some dying child of the world, and try to comfort him with their doctrines. Let them see if their vaunted theories will calm his gnawing, restless anxiety about the future, and enable him to depart in peace. Let them show us, if they can, a few well-authenticated cases of joy and happiness in death without Bible promises—without conversion—and without that faith in the blood of Christ, which Scriptural theology enjoins. Alas, when men are leaving the world, conscience makes sad work of these new systems. Conscience is not easily satisfied in a dying hour, that there is no such thing as hell.

Every reasonable conception that we can form of a future state is directly against these teachers. Imagine a heaven which would contain all mankind! Imagine a heaven in which holy and unholy, pure and impure, good and bad, would be all gathered together in one confused mass! What point of union would there be in such a company? What common bond of sympathy and brotherhood? What common delight in a common service? What concord, what harmony, what peace, what oneness of spirit could exist? Surely the mind revolts from the idea of a heaven in which there would be no distinction between the righteous and the wicked—between Pharaoh and Moses, between Abraham and the Sodomites, between Paul and Nero, between Peter and Judas Iscariot, between the man who dies in the act of murder or drunkenness and men like Baxter, Wilberforce, and M'Cheyne! Surely an eternity in such a miserable, confused crowd, would be worse than annihilation itself! Surely such a heaven would be no better than hell!

The interests of all holiness and morality are directly against these teachers. If all men and women alike are God's children, whatever is the difference between them in their lives, and all are alike going to heaven, however different they may be from one another here in the world—where is the use of laboring after holiness at all? What motive remains for living soberly, righteously, and godly? What does it matter how men conduct themselves, if all go to heaven, and nobody goes to hell? Surely the very heathen of Greece and Rome could teach us something better and wiser than this? Surely a doctrine which is subversive of holiness and morality, and takes away all motives to exertion, carries on the face of it the stamp of its origin. It is of earth—and not of heaven. It is of the devil—and not of God.

The Bible is against these teachers all through. Hundreds and thousands of texts might be quoted which are diametrically opposed to their theories. These texts must be rejected summarily, if the Bible is to square with their views. There may be no reason why they should be rejected—but to suit the theology I speak of, they must be thrown away. At this rate the authority of the whole Bible is soon at an end. And what do they give us in its place? Nothing—nothing at all! They rob us of the bread of life, and do not give us in its stead so much as a stone!

Reader, once more I warn you to beware of this theology. I charge you to hold fast the doctrine which I have been endeavoring to uphold in these pages. Remember what I have said, and never let it go. No inheritance of glory without sonship to God! No sonship to God without an interest in Christ! No interest in Christ without your own personal faith! This is God's truth. Never forsake it.

Who now among the readers of this volume *desires to know whether he is a son of God?* Ask yourself this day—and ask it as in God's sight, whether you have repented and believed. Ask yourself whether you are experimentally acquainted with Christ, and united to Him in heart. If not, you may be very sure you are no son of God. You are not yet born again. You are still in your sins. Your Father in creation, God may be—but your reconciled and pardoning Father, God is not. Yes, though church and world may agree to tell you to the contrary—though clergy and laity unite in flattering you! Their opinions are worth nothing in the sight of God. Let God be true and every man a liar. Without faith in Christ you are no son of God—you are not born again.

Who is there among the readers of this volume, who *desires to become a son of God?* Let that person see his sin, and flee to Christ for salvation, and this day he shall be placed among the children. Only acknowledge your iniquity, and lay hold of the hand that Jesus holds out to you this day, and sonship, with all its privileges, is your own. Only confess your sins, and bring them unto Christ, and God is faithful and just to forgive you your sins, and cleanse you from all unrighteousness. This very day old things shall pass away, and all things become new. This very day you shall be forgiven, pardoned, accepted in the beloved. This very day you shall have a new name given to you in heaven. You did take up this book a child of wrath. You shall lie down tonight a child of God. Mark this, if your professed desire after sonship is sincere—if you are truly weary of your sins, and have really something more than a lazy wish to be free—there is real comfort for you. It is all true. It is all written in Scripture, even as I have written it down. I dare not raise barriers between you and God. This day I say, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be a son, and be saved.

Who is there among the readers of this volume, that *is a son of God indeed?* Rejoice, I say, and be exceeding glad of your privileges. Rejoice, for you have good cause to be thankful. Remember the words of the beloved Apostle—*"Behold what manner of love the father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God."* (1 John 3:1.) How wonderful, that heaven should look down on earth—that the holy God should set His affections on sinful man, and admit him into His family! What though the world does not

understand you! What though the men of this world laugh at you, and cast out your name as evil! Let them laugh, if they will. God is your Father. You have no need to be ashamed. The Queen can create a nobleman. The bishops can ordain clergymen. But Queen, Lords, and Commons—bishops, priests, and deacons—all together cannot, of their own power, make one son of God, or one of greater dignity than a son of God. The man that can call God his Father, and Christ his elder Brother—that man may be poor and lowly, yet he never need be ashamed.

II. Let me show you, in the second place, **the *special EVIDENCES of the true Christian's relation to God.***

How shall a man make sure work of his own sonship? How shall he find out whether he is one that has come to Christ by faith and been born again? What are the marks, and signs, and tokens, by which the sons of God may be known? This is a question which all who love eternal life ought to ask. This is a question to which the verses of Scripture I am asking you to consider, like many others, supply an answer.

1. The sons of God, for one thing, are all ***led by His Spirit***. What says the Scripture? "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." (Rom. 8:14.)

They are all under the leading and teaching of a power which is Almighty, though unseen—even the power of the Holy Spirit. They no longer turn every man his own way and walk every man in the light of his own eyes, and follow every man his own natural heart's desire. The Spirit leads them. The Spirit guides them. There is a movement in their hearts, lives, and affections, which they feel, though they may not be able to explain, and a movement which is always more or less in the same direction.

They are led away from sin—away from self-righteousness—away from the world. This is the road by which the Spirit leads God's children. Those whom God adopts He teaches and trains. He shows to them their own heart. He makes them weary of their own ways. He makes them long for inward peace.

They are led by Christ. They are led to the Bible. They are led to prayer. They are led to holiness. This is the beaten path along which the Spirit makes them to travel. Those whom God adopts He always sanctifies. He makes sin very bitter to them. He makes holiness very sweet.

It is the Spirit who leads them to Sinai, and first shows them the law, that their hearts may be broken. It is He who leads them to Calvary, and shows them the cross, that their hearts may be bound up and healed. It is He who leads them to Pisgah, and gives them distant views of the promised land, that their hearts may be cheered. When they are taken into the wilderness, and taught to see their own emptiness, it is the leading of the Spirit. When they are carried up to Tabor, and lifted up with glimpses of the glory to come, it is the leading of the Spirit. Each one of God's sons is the subject of these leadings. Each one yields himself willingly to them. And each one is led by the right way, to bring him to a city of habitation.

Reader, settle this down in your heart, and do not let it go. The sons of God are a people led by the Spirit of God, and always led more or less in the same way. Their experience will tally wonderfully when they compare notes in heaven. This is one mark of sonship.

2. Furthermore, all the sons of God ***have the feelings of adopted children towards their Father in heaven***. What says the Scripture? "For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, Abba! Father!" (Rom. 8:15.)

The sons of God are delivered from that slavish fear of God, which sin begets in the natural heart. They are redeemed from that feeling of guilt, which made Adam hide himself in the trees of the garden, and Cain go out from the presence of the Lord. They are no longer afraid of God's holiness, and justice, and majesty. They no longer feel as if there was a great gulf and barrier between themselves and God—and as if God was angry with them, and must be angry with them, because of their sins. From these chains and fetters of soul, the sons of God are delivered.

Their feelings towards God are now those of peace and confidence. They see Him as a Father reconciled in Christ Jesus. They look on Him as a God whose attributes are all satisfied by their great Mediator and Peacemaker, the Lord Jesus—as a God who is just, and yet the justifier of everyone that believes on Jesus. As a Father, they draw near to Him with boldness. As a Father, they can speak to Him with freedom. They have exchanged the spirit of bondage for that of liberty, and the spirit of fear for that of love. They know that God is holy—but they are not afraid. They know that they are sinners—but they are not afraid. Though holy, they believe that God is completely reconciled. Though sinners, they believe they are clothed all over with Jesus Christ. Such is the feeling of the sons of God.

I allow that some of them have this feeling more vividly than others. Some of them carry about scraps and remnants of the old spirit of bondage to their dying day. Many of them have fits and paroxysms of fear returning upon them at intervals. Very few of the sons of God could be found who would not say, if cross-examined, that since they knew Christ they have had very different feelings towards God, from what they ever had before. They feel as if something like the old Roman form of adoption had taken place between themselves and their Father in heaven. They feel as if He had said to each one of them, "Will you be my son?" and as if their hearts had replied, "I will."

Reader, try to grasp this also, and hold it fast. The sons of God are a people who feel towards God in a way that the children of the world do not. They feel no more slavish fear towards Him. They feel towards Him as a reconciled parent. This then is another mark of sonship.

3. But again, the sons of God ***have the witness of the Spirit in their conscience***. What says the Scripture? "The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God." (Rom. 8:16.)

They have all got something within their hearts, which tells them there is a relationship between themselves and God. They feel something which tells them that old things are passed away, and all things become new—that guilt is gone—that peace is restored—that heaven's door is opened, and hell's door is shut. They have, in short, what the children of the world have not—a felt, positive, reasonable hope. They have what Paul calls the "seal" and "pledge" of the Spirit. (2 Cor. 1:22; Ephes. 1:13.)

Reader, I do not for a moment deny that this witness of the spirit is exceedingly various in the extent to which the sons of God possess

it. With some it is a loud, clear, ringing, distinct testimony of conscience—"I am Christ's and Christ is mine." With others it is a little feeble, stammering whisper, which the devil and the flesh often prevent being heard. Some of the children of God speed on their course towards heaven under the full sails of assurance. Others are tossed to and fro all their voyage, and will scarcely believe they have got true faith. But take the least and lowest of the sons of God. Ask him if he will give up the little bit of religious hope which he has attained? Ask him if he will exchange his heart, with all its doubts and conflicts, its fightings, and fears—ask him if he will exchange that heart for the heart of the downright worldly and careless man? Ask him if he would be content to turn round and throw down the things he has got hold of, and go back to the world? Who can doubt what the answer would be? "I cannot do that," he would reply. "I do not know whether I have faith—I do not feel sure I have got grace—but I have got something within me I would not like to part with." And what is that *"something"?* I will tell you. It is the witness of the Spirit.

Reader, try to understand this also. The sons of God have the witness of the Spirit in their consciences. This is another mark of sonship.

4. One thing more let me add. All the sons of God ***take part in suffering with Christ***. What says the Scripture? "And if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with Him." (Rom. 8:17.)

All the children of God have a cross to carry. They have trials, troubles, and afflictions to go through for the Gospel's sake. They have trials from the world—trials from the flesh—and trials from the devil. They have trials of feeling from relations and friends—hard words, hard conduct, and hard judgment. They have trials in the matter of character—slander, misrepresentation, mockery, insinuation of false motives—all these often rain thick upon them. They have trials in the matter of worldly interest. They have often to choose whether they will please man, and lose glory; or gain glory and offend man. They have trials from their own hearts. They have each generally their own thorn in the flesh—their own home-devil, who is their worst foe. This is the experience of the sons of God.

Some of them suffer more, and some less. Some of them suffer in one way, and some in another. God measures out their portions like a wise physician, and cannot err. But never, I believe, was there one child of God who reached paradise without a cross.

Suffering is the diet of the Lord's family. "Whom the Lord loves He chastens." "If you be without chastisement, then are you illegitimate children, and not sons." "Through much tribulation we must enter the kingdom of God." (Heb. 12:6, 8; Acts 14:22.) When Bishop Latimer was told by his landlord that he had never had a trouble, "Then," said he, "God cannot be here."

Suffering is a part of the process by which the sons of God are sanctified. They are chastened to wean them from the world, and make them partakers of God's holiness. The Captain of their salvation was made perfect through sufferings, and so are they. There never yet was a great saint who had not either great afflictions or great corruptions. Well said Philip Melancthon, "Where there are no cares, there will generally be no prayers."

Reader, try to settle this down into your heart also. The sons of God have all to bear a cross. A suffering Savior has suffering disciples. The Bridegroom was a man of sorrows. The bride must not be a woman of pleasures, and unacquainted with grief. Blessed are those who mourn. Let us not murmur at the cross. This also is a sign of sonship.

Reader, I warn you never to suppose that you are a son of God unless you have the Scriptural marks of sonship. Beware of a sonship without evidences. Again I say, Beware. When a man has no leading of the Spirit to show me—no Spirit of adoption to tell of—no witness of the Spirit in his conscience—no cross in his experience—is this a son of God? God forbid that I should say so! His spot is not the spot of God's children. He is no heir of glory.

Tell me not that you have been baptized and taught the Catechism of the Church of England, and therefore *must* be a child of God. I tell you that the 'parish register' is not the book of life. I tell you that to be styled a child of God, and called regenerate in infancy by the faith and charity of the Prayer-book, is one thing—but to be a child of God indeed, another thing altogether. Go and read that Catechism again. It is a "death unto sin and a new birth unto righteousness," which makes men *children of grace*. Unless you know these by experience, you are no son of God.

Tell me not that you are a member of the Church, and so must be a son. I answer that the sons of the Church are not necessarily the sons of God. Such sonship is not the sonship of the eighth of Romans. That is the sonship you must have, if you are to be saved.

And now, I doubt not some reader of these pages will want to know if he may not be saved without the witness of the Spirit.

I answer, if you mean by the witness of the Spirit, the full assurance of hope, you may be so saved without question. But if you want to know whether a man can be saved without any inward sense, or knowledge, or hope of salvation, I answer that ordinarily he cannot. I warn you plainly to cast away all indecision as to your state before God, and to make your calling sure. Clear up your position and relationship. Do not think there is anything praiseworthy in always doubting. Leave that to the Papist. Do not imagine it wise to be ever living on "debatable ground." "Assurance," said old Dodd, the Puritan, "may be attained, and what have we been doing all our lives since we became Christians if we have not attained it?"

I doubt not some true Christians who read this volume will think their evidence of sonship is too small to be good, and will write bitter things against themselves. Let me try to cheer them. Who gave you the feelings you possess? Who made you hate sin? Who made you love Christ? Who made you long and labor to be holy? Whence did these feelings come? Did they come from nature? There are no such products in a natural man's heart. Did they come from the devil? He would gladly stifle such feelings altogether. Cheer up, and take courage. Fear not, neither be cast down. Press forward, and go on. There is hope for you after all. Strive. Labor. Seek. Ask. Knock. Follow on. You shall yet see that you are the sons of God.

III. Let me show you, in the last place, ***the PRIVILEGES of the true Christian's relation to God.***

Nothing can be conceived more glorious than the prospects of the sons of God. The words of Scripture which head this tract, contain a rich mine of good and comfortable things. "If we are children," says Paul, "we are heirs; heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ—to be glorified together with Him." (Rom. 8:17.)

True Christians, then, are "heirs,"—something is prepared for them all which is yet to be revealed.

They are "heirs of God." To be heirs of the rich on earth is something. How much more then is it to be son and heir of the King of kings!

They are "joint-heirs with Christ." They shall share in His majesty, and take part in His glory. They shall be glorified together with Him.

And this, remember, is for all the 'children'. Abraham took care to provide for all his children—and God takes care to provide for His. None of them are disinherited. None will be cast out. None will be cut off. Each shall stand in his lot, and have a portion in the day when the Lord brings many sons to glory.

Reader, who can tell the full nature of the inheritance of the saints in light? Who can describe the glory which is yet to be revealed, and given to the children of God? Words fail us. Language falls short. Mind cannot conceive fully, and tongue cannot express perfectly —the things which are comprised in the glory yet to come upon the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty. Oh, it is indeed a true saying of the Apostle John! "It does not yet appear what we shall be." (1 John 3:2.)

The very Bible itself only lifts the veil a little which hangs over this subject. How could it do more? We could not thoroughly understand more if more had been told us. Our constitution is, as yet, too earthly—our understanding is, as yet, too carnal to appreciate more, if we had it. The Bible generally deals with the subject in 'negative terms', and not in positive assertions. It describes *what there will not be* in the glorious inheritance, that thus we may get some faint idea of what there will be. It paints the *absence* of certain things, in order that we may drink in a little the blessedness of things *present*. It tells us that the inheritance is incorruptible, undefiled, and fades not away. It tells us that the crown of glory fades not away. It tells us that the devil is to be bound, that there shall be no more night, and no more curse, that death shall be cast into the lake of fire, that all tears shall be wiped away, and that the inhabitant shall no more say, "I am sick." And these things are glorious things indeed! No corruption! No fading! No withering! No devil! No curse of sin! No sorrow! No tears! No sickness! No death! Surely the cup of the children of God will indeed run over!

But, reader, there are 'positive things' told us about the glory yet to come upon the heirs of God, which ought not to be kept back. There are many sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comforts in their future inheritance, which all true Christians would do well to consider. There are cordials for fainting pilgrims in many words and expressions of Scripture, which you and I ought to lay up against time of need.

Is ***KNOWLEDGE*** pleasant to us now? Is the little that we know of God, and Christ, and the Bible, precious to our souls, and do we long for more? We shall have it perfectly in glory. What says the Scripture? "Then shall I know, even as also I am known." (1 Cor. 13:12.) Blessed be God, there will be no more disagreements among believers! Episcopalians and Presbyterians—Calvinists and Arminians—Millenarians and Anti-millenarians—friends of Establishments and friends of the voluntary system—advocates of infant baptism and advocates of adult baptism—all will at length see eye to eye. The former ignorance will have passed away. We shall marvel to find how childish and blind we have been.

Is ***HOLINESS*** pleasant to us now? Is sin the burden and bitterness of our lives? Do we long for entire conformity to the image of God? We shall have it perfectly in glory. What says the Scripture? Christ gave Himself for the Church, "that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, having no spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." (Ephes. 5:27.) Oh, the blessedness of an eternal good-bye to sin! Oh, how little the best of us do at present! Oh, what unutterable corruption sticks, like tar, to all our motives, all our thoughts, all our words, all our actions! Oh, how many of us, like Naphtali, are goodly in our words—but, like Reuben, unstable in our works! Thank God, all this shall be changed!

Is ***REST*** pleasant to us now? Do we often feel faint, though pursuing? Do we long for a world in which we need not be always watching and warring? We shall have it perfectly in glory. What says the Scripture? "There remains a rest for the people of God." (Heb. 4:9.) The daily, hourly conflict with the world, the flesh, and the devil, shall at length be at an end. The enemy shall be bound. The warfare shall be over. The wicked shall at last cease from troubling. The weary shall at length be at rest. There shall be a great calm.

Is ***SERVICE*** pleasant to us now? Do we find it sweet to work for Christ, and yet groan, being burdened by a feeble body? Is our spirit often willing—but hampered and clogged by the poor weak flesh? Have our hearts burned within us when we have been allowed to give a cup of cold water for Christ's sake, and have we sighed to think what unprofitable servants we are? Let us take comfort. We shall be able to serve perfectly in glory, and without weariness. What says the Scripture? "They serve Him day and night in His temple." (Rev. 7:15.)

Is ***SATISFACTION*** pleasant to us now? Do we find the world empty? Do we long for the filling up of every void place and gap in our hearts? We shall have it perfectly in glory. We shall no longer have to mourn over cracks in all our earthen vessels—and thorns on all our roses—and bitter dregs in all our sweet cups. We shall no longer lament with Jonah over withered gourds. We shall no longer say with Solomon, "All is vanity and vexation of spirit." We shall no longer cry with aged David, "I have seen an end of all perfection." What says the Scripture? "I shall be satisfied when I awake with Your likeness." (Psalm 17:15.)

Is ***COMMUNION WITH THE SAINTS*** pleasant to us now? Do we feel that we are never so happy as when we are with the excellent of the earth? Are we never so much at home as in their company? We shall have it perfectly in glory. What says the Scripture? "The Son of Man shall send His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which work iniquity." "He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds." (Matt. 13:41; 24:31.) Praised be God! We shall see all the saints of whom we have read in the Bible, and in whose steps we have tried to walk. We shall see apostles, prophets, patriarchs, martyrs, reformers, missionaries, and ministers, of whom the world was not worthy. We shall see the faces of those we have known and loved in Christ on earth, and over whose departure we shed bitter tears. We shall see them more bright and glorious than they ever were before. And best of all, we shall see them without hurry and anxiety, and without feeling that we only meet to part again. In glory there is no death, no parting, no farewell!

Is ***COMMUNION WITH CHRIST*** pleasant to us now? Do we find His name precious to us? Do we feel our hearts burn within us

at the thought of His dying love? We shall have perfect communion with Him in glory. "We shall ever be with the Lord." (1 Thess. 4:17.) We shall be with Him in paradise. We shall see His face in the kingdom. These eyes of ours will behold those hands and feet which were pierced with nails, and that head which was crowned with thorns. Where He is, there will the sons of God be. When He comes, they will come with Him. When He sits down in His glory, they will sit down by His side. Blessed prospect indeed!

I am a dying man in a dying world! All before me is dark! The world to come is a harbor unknown! But Christ is there, and that is enough. Surely if there is rest and peace in following Him by faith on earth, there will be far more rest and peace when we see Him face to face. If we have found it good to follow the pillar of cloud and fire in the wilderness, we shall find it a thousand times better to sit down in our eternal inheritance with our Joshua in the promised land.

Ah, reader, if you are not yet among the sons and heirs, I do pity you with all my heart. How much you are missing! How little true comfort you are enjoying! There you are, struggling on, and toiling in the fire, and wearying yourself for mere earthly ends—seeking rest, and finding none—chasing shadows, and never catching them—wondering why you are not happy, and yet refusing to see the cause—hungry and thirsty, and empty, and yet blind to the plenty within your reach. Oh, that you were wise! Oh, that you would hear the voice of Jesus, and learn of Him!

Reader, if you are one of those who are sons and heirs, you may well rejoice and be happy. You may well wait, like the boy Patience in Pilgrim's Progress. Your best things are yet to come. You may well bear crosses without murmuring. Your light affliction is but for a moment. The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which is to be revealed. When Christ our life appears, then you also shall appear with Him in glory. You may well not envy the transgressor and his prosperity. You are the truly rich! Well said a dying believer in my own parish, "I am more rich than I ever was in my life." You may say, in the spirit of Mephibosheth, when David returned to Jerusalem, "Let the world take all, my King is coming again in peace." You may say as Alexander said when he gave all his riches away, and was asked what he kept for himself, "I have hope."

You need not be cast down by **sickness**. The eternal part of you is safe and provided for, whatever happens to your body. You may well look calmly on **death**. It opens a door between you and your inheritance. You may well not sorrow exclusively over the things of the world—over partings and bereavements—over losses and crosses. The day of gathering is before you. Your treasure is beyond reach of harm. Heaven is becoming every year more full of those you love, and earth more empty. Glory in your inheritance. It is all yours if you are a son of God. "If we are children, then we are heirs."

And now, reader, in concluding this subject, let me ask you, ***Whose child are you?*** Are you the child of nature, or the child of grace? Are you the child of the devil, or the child of God? You cannot be both at once. Which are you?

Settle the question, reader, for you must die at last either one or the other. Settle it, reader, for it can be settled, and it is folly to leave it doubtful. Settle it, for the time is short, and the world is getting old, and you are fast drawing near to the judgment seat of Christ. Settle it, for death is near, the Lord is at hand; and who can tell what a day may bring forth? Oh, that you would never rest until the question is settled! Oh, that you may never feel satisfied until you can say, "I have been born again. I am a son of God."

Reader, *if you are not a son and heir of God, let me entreat you to become one without delay*. Would you be **rich**? There are unsearchable riches in Christ. Would you be **noble**? You shall be a king. Would you be **happy**? You shall have a peace which passes understanding, and which the world can never give, and never take away. Oh, come out, and take up the cross, and follow Christ! Come out from among the thoughtless and worldly, and hear the Word of the Lord—"I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty." (2 Cor. 6:18.)

Reader, *if you are a son of God, I beseech you to walk worthy of your Father's house*. I charge you solemnly to honor Him in your life—and above all to honor Him by implicit obedience to all His commands, and hearty love to all His children. Labor to travel through the world like a child of God, and heir of glory. Let men be able to trace a family likeness between you and Him that begat you. Live a heavenly life. Seek things that are above. Do not seem to be building your nest below. Behave like a man who seeks a city out of sight, whose citizenship is in heaven, and who would be content with many hardships until he gets home.

Labor to *feel like a son of God* in every condition in which you are placed. Never forget you are on your Father's ground so long as you are here on earth. **Never forget that a Father's hand sends all your mercies and crosses.** Cast every care on Him. Be happy and cheerful in Him. Why indeed are you ever sad if you are the King's son? Why should men ever doubt when they look at you, whether it is a pleasant thing to be one of God's children?

Labor to *behave towards others like a son of God*. Be blameless and harmless in your day and generation. Be a peacemaker among all you know. Seek for your children, sonship to God above everything else. Seek for them an inheritance in heaven, whatever else you do for them. No man leaves his children so well provided for, as he who leaves them sons and heirs of God.

Persevere in your Christian calling, if you are a son of God, and press forward more and more. Be careful to lay aside every weight, and the sin which most easily besets you. Keep your eyes steadily fixed on Jesus. Abide in Him. Remember that without Him you can do nothing, and with Him you can do all things. Watch and pray daily. Be steadfast, unmoveable, and always abounding in the work of the Lord. Settle it down in your heart, that not a cup of cold water given in the name of a disciple, shall lose its reward, and that every year you are so much nearer home.

Yet a little time and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Then shall be the glorious liberty, and the full manifestation of the sons of God. Then shall the world acknowledge that they were the truly wise. Then shall the sons of God at length come of age. Then shall they no longer be heirs in expectancy—but heirs in possession. And then shall they hear with exceeding joy, those comfortable words, "Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world!" (Matt. 25:34.) Surely that day will make amends for all!

That all who read these pages may see the value of the inheritance of glory, and be found at length in possession of it—is my heart's desire and prayer.

Be Zealous

by J. C. Ryle

"It is always good to **be zealous** in a good cause." (Galatians 4:18)

There is a subject before your eyes of vast importance. I mean the subject of religious zeal.

It is a subject, like many others in religion, most sadly misunderstood. Many would be ashamed to be thought "zealous." Many are ready to say of zealous people what Festus said of Paul, "Paul, you are crazy! Your great learning is driving you insane!" (Acts 26:24.)

But it is a subject which no reader of the Bible has any right to pass over. If we make the Bible our rule of faith and practice, we cannot turn away from it. We must look it in the face. What does the Apostle Paul say to Titus? "Christ gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, **zealous of good works**." (Titus 2:14.) What does the Lord Jesus say to the Laodicean Church? "**Be *zealous*** and repent." (Rev.3:19.)

Reader, I say plainly, I want to plead the cause of zeal in religion. I am not afraid of it. I love it. I admire it. I believe it to be a mighty blessing. I want to strike a blow at the lazy, easy, sleepy Christianity of these latter days, which can see no beauty in zeal, and only uses the word "zealot" as a word of reproach. I want to remind Christians, that "Zealot" was a name given to one of our Lord Jesus Christ's apostles, and to persuade them to be zealous men.

Come now, and give me your attention, while I tell you something about zeal. Listen to me for your own sake—for the sake of the world—for the sake of the Church of Christ. Listen to me, and by God's help, I will show you that to be zealous—is to be wise.

I. Let me show you, in the first place, *what is zeal in religion*.

II. Let me show you, in the second place, *when a man can be called rightly zealous in religion*.

III. Let me show you, in the third place, *why it is a good thing for a man to be zealous in religion*.

I. First of all, I propose to bring before you this question, **"What is *zeal* in religion?"**

Zeal in religion is a burning desire to please God, to do His will, and to advance His glory in the world in every possible way. It is a desire which no man feels by nature—which the Spirit puts into the heart of every believer when he is converted—but which some believers feel so much more strongly than others, that they alone deserve to be called zealous men.

This desire is so strong when it really reigns in a man, that it impels him to make any sacrifice—to go through any trouble, to deny himself to any amount—to suffer, to work, to labor, to toil—to spend himself and be spent, and even to die—if only he can please God and honor Christ.

A zealous man is pre-eminently *a man of one thing*. It is not enough to say that he is earnest, hearty, uncompromising, thorough-going, whole-hearted, fervent in spirit. He only sees one thing—he cares for one thing—he lives for one thing—he is swallowed up in one thing—and that one thing is to please God. Whether he lives—or whether he dies; whether he has health—or whether he has sickness; whether he is rich—or whether he is poor; whether he pleases man—or whether he gives offence; whether he is thought wise—or whether he is thought foolish; whether he gets blame—or whether he gets praise; whether he gets honor—or whether he gets shame—for all this, the zealous man cares nothing at all. He burns for one thing, and that one thing is to please God, and to advance God's glory. If he is consumed in the very burning, he is not worried—he is content.

He feels that like a lamp, he is made to burn, and if consumed in burning, he has but done the work for which God appointed him. Such a one will always find a sphere for his zeal. If he cannot preach, and work, and give money, he will cry, and sigh, and pray. Yes! if he is only a pauper, on a perpetual bed of sickness, he will make the wheels of sin around him drive heavily, by continually interceding against it. If he cannot fight in the valley with Joshua, he will do the work of Moses, Aaron, and Hur, on the hill. If he is cut off from working himself, he will give the Lord no rest until help is raised up from another quarter, and the work is done. This is what I mean, when I speak of zeal in religion.

You know the habit of mind that makes men **great** in this world—that makes such men as Alexander the Great, or Julius Caesar, or Oliver Cromwell, or Peter the Great, or Charles XII, or Marlborough, or Napoleon, or Pitt. You know that they were all men of one thing. They threw themselves into one grand pursuit. They cared for nothing else. They put everything else aside. They counted everything else as second-rate, and of subordinate importance, compared to the one thing that they put before their eyes every day they lived. I say that the same habit of mind applied to the service of the Lord Jesus Christ, becomes religious zeal.

You know the habit of mind that makes men great in the **sciences** of this world—that makes such men as Archimedes, or Sir Isaac Newton, or Galileo, or Ferguson the astronomer, or James Watt. All these were men of one thing. They brought the powers of their minds into one single focus. They cared for nothing else beside. And this was the secret of their success. I say that this same habit consecrated to the service of God, becomes religious zeal.

You know the habit of mind that makes men **rich**—that makes men amass mighty fortunes, and leave millions behind them. What kind of people were many of the bankers, and merchants, and tradesmen, who have left a name behind them, as men who acquired immense wealth, and out of poverty, became rich? They were all men that threw themselves entirely into their business, and neglected everything else for the sake of that business. They gave their first attention, their first thoughts, the best of their time, and the best part of their mind, to pushing forward the transactions in which they were engaged. They were men of one thing. Their hearts were not divided. They devoted themselves, body, soul, and mind, to their business. They seemed to live for nothing else. I say that, if you turn that habit of mind to the service of God and His Christ, it makes religious zeal.

Now, reader, this habit of mind—this zeal was *the characteristic of all* ***the Apostles***. See for example the Apostle Paul. Hear him when he speaks to the Ephesian elders for the last time, "In town after town the Holy Spirit assures me that imprisonment and suffering are waiting for me. But I don't place any value on my life, if only I can finish my race and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus of testifying to the gospel of God's grace." (Acts 20:23-24)

Hear him again, when he writes to the Philippians, "Brothers, I do not consider myself to have embraced it. But this one thing I do: Forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I keep pursuing the goal to win the prize of God's heavenly call in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 3:13-14). See him from the day of his conversion, giving up his brilliant prospects—forsaking all for Christ's sake—and going forth to preach that very Jesus whom he had once despised. See him going to and fro throughout the world from that time—through persecution—through oppression—through opposition—through prisons—through bonds—through afflictions—through things next to death itself, up to the very day when he sealed his faith with his blood, and died at Rome, a martyr for that Gospel which he had so long proclaimed. This was true religious *zeal*.

This again, was *the characteristic of the* ***early Christians***. They were men "everywhere spoken against." They were driven to worship God in dens and caves of the earth. They often lost everything in the world for their religion's sake. They generally gained nothing but the cross, persecution, shame, and reproach. But they seldom, very seldom, went back. If they could not dispute, at least they could suffer. If they could not convince their adversaries by argument, at any rate they could die, and prove that they themselves were in earnest. Look at Ignatius cheerfully traveling to the place where he was to be devoured by lions, and saying as he went, "Now do I begin to be a disciple of my master, Christ." Hear old Polycarp before the Roman Governor, saying boldly when called upon to deny Christ, "Eighty-six years have I served Christ, neither has He ever offended me in anything, and how then can I revile my King?" This was true *zeal*.

This again was *the characteristic of* ***Martin Luther***. He boldly defied the most powerful hierarchy that the world has ever seen. He unveiled its corruptions with an unflinching hand. He preached the long-neglected truth of justification by faith, in spite of anathemas and excommunications, fast and thickly poured upon him. See him going to the Diet at Worms, and pleading his cause before the Emperor, and the Legate, and a army of the children of this world. Hear him saying, when men were dissuading him from going, and reminding him of the fate of John Huss, "Though there were a devil under every tile on the roofs of Worms, in the name of the Lord I shall go forward." This was true *zeal*.

This again was *the characteristic of our own* ***English Reformers***. You have it in our first Reformer, Wycliffe, when he rose up on his sick bed, and said to the friars, who wanted him to retract all he had said against the Pope, "I shall not die—but live to declare the villanies of the friars." You have it in Cranmer, content to die at the stake rather than deny Christ's Gospel, holding forth that hand to be first burned, which in a moment of weakness had signed a recantation, and saying as he held it in the flames, "This unworthy hand!" You have it in old father Latimer, standing boldly on his faggot, at the age of seventy years, and saying to Ridley, "Courage, brother Ridley! we shall light such a candle this day, as, by God's grace, shall never be put out." This was *zeal*.

This again has been *the characteristic of all the* ***greatest Missionaries***. You see it in Mrs. Judson, in Carey, in Morrison, in Schwartz, in Williams, in Brainerd, in Elliott. You see it in none more brightly than in Henry Martyn. This was a man who had reached the highest academic honors that Cambridge could bestow. Whatever profession he chose to follow, he had the most dazzling prospects of success. He turned his back upon it all. He chose to preach the Gospel to poor benighted heathen. He went forth to an early grave, in a foreign land. He said when he got there, and saw the condition of the people, "I could bear to be torn in pieces, if I could but hear the sobs of penitence—if I could but see the eyes of faith directed to the Redeemer!" This was *zeal*.

But, reader, to look away from all earthly examples—this, remember, is pre-eminently the characteristic of our Lord and Savior **Jesus Christ** Himself. Of Him it was written hundreds of years before He came upon earth, that He was "clad with *zeal* as with a cloak," and "the *zeal* of your house has consumed me." And his own words were, "My food is to do my Father's will, and to finish His work." (Psalm 66:9; Isaiah 59:17; John 4:34.)

Where shall we begin, if we try to give examples of his zeal? Where should we end, if we once began? Trace all the narratives of His life in the four Gospels. Read all the history of what He was from the beginning of his ministry to the end. Surely if there ever was one who was *all zeal*, it was our great Example—our Head—our High Priest—the great Shepherd of our Profession, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Reader, if these things are so, you should not only beware of running down zeal—but you should also beware of allowing zeal to be run down in your presence. Zeal may be badly directed, and then it becomes a curse—but it may be turned to the highest and best ends, and then it is a mighty blessing. Like fire not well directed, it is a bad master—but like fire also, if well directed, it is one of the best of servants. Listen not to those people who talk of zeal as weakness and enthusiasm. Listen not to those who see no beauty in missions—who laugh at all attempts at the conversion of souls—who call societies for sending the Gospel to the world useless—and who look upon City Missions, and District Visiting, and Ragged Schools, and Open Air Preaching, as nothing but foolishness and fanaticism. Beware, lest in joining a cry of that kind you condemn the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Beware, lest you speak against Him who has "left us an example that we should follow His steps."

Alas, I fear there are many professing Christians who if they had lived in the days when our Lord and His apostles walked upon earth, would have called Him and all His followers enthusiasts and fanatics. There are many, I fear, who have more in common with Annas and Caiaphas—with Pilate and Herod—with Festus and Agrippa—with Felix and Gallio—than with Paul and the Lord Jesus Christ.

II. I pass on now to the second thing I proposed to speak of. ***When is a man truly zealous in religion?***

There never was a grace of which Satan has not made a counterfeit. There never was a good coin issued from the mint—but forgers at once have coined something very like it. It is one of Satan's devices to place distorted copies of the believer's graces before the eyes of men, and so to bring the true graces into contempt. No grace has suffered so much in this way as zeal. Of none perhaps are there so many shams and counterfeits abroad. We must therefore clear the ground of all rubbish on this question. We must find out when zeal in religion is really good, and true, and of God.

1. Reader, if zeal be true, **it will be a *zeal according to knowledge.*** It must not be a blind, ignorant zeal. It must be a calm,

reasonable, intelligent principle, which can show the warrant of Scripture for every step it takes. The unconverted Jews had zeal. Paul says, "I bear them record that they have a zeal of God—*but not according to knowledge.*" (Rom. 10:21.) Saul had zeal when he was a persecuting Pharisee. He says himself, in one of his addresses to the Jews, "I was zealous toward God, as you all are this day." (Acts 22:3.) Manasseh had zeal in the days when he was an idolater. The man who made his own children pass through the fire—who gave up the fruit of his body to Moloch, to atone for the sin of his soul—that man had zeal. James and John had zeal when they would have called down fire on a Samaritan village. But our Lord rebuked them. Peter had zeal when he drew his sword and cut off the ear of Malchus. But he was quite wrong. The Catholics Bonner and Gardiner had zeal when they burned Latimer and Cranmer. Were they not in earnest? Let us do them justice. They were zealous, though it was for an unscriptural religion. The members of the Catholic inquisition in Spain had zeal, when they tortured men, and put them to horrible deaths, because they would not forsake the Gospel. Yes—they marched men and women to the stake in solemn procession, and called it "An act of Faith," and believed they were doing God service. The Hindus, who lie down before the car of Juggernaut, and allow their bodies to be crushed under its wheels—had not they zeal? The Indian widows, who burn themselves on the funeral pile of their deceased husbands—the Roman Catholics, who persecuted to death the Christian, and cast down men and women from rocks and precipices, because they were heretics—had not they zeal? The Saracens—the Crusaders—the Jesuits—the anabaptists of Munster—the followers of Joanna Southcote, had they not all zeal? Yes! Yes! I do not deny it. All these had zeal beyond question. They were all zealous. They were all in earnest. But their zeal was not such zeal as God approves—it was not a "zeal according to knowledge."

2. Furthermore, if zeal be true, it will be **a zeal *from true motives***. Such is the subtlety of the heart, that men will often do right things from wrong motives. Amaziah and Joash, kings of Judah, are striking proofs of this. Just so a man may have zeal about things that are good and right—but from ulterior motives, and not from a desire to please God. And such zeal is worth nothing. It is reprobate silver. It is utterly lacking when placed in the balance of God. Man looks only at the actions. God looks at the motives. Man only thinks of the quantity of work done. God considers the doer's heart.

There is such a thing as zeal from *PARTY SPIRIT*. It is quite possible for a man to be unwearied in promoting the interests of his own Church or denomination, and yet to have no grace in his own heart—to be ready to die for the peculiar opinions of his own religious section, and yet to have no real love to Christ. Such was the zeal of the Pharisees. They "compassed sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he was made, they made him two-fold more the child of hell than themselves." (Matt. 23:15.) This zeal is not true.

There is such a thing as zeal from more *SELFISHNESS*. There are times when it is men's interest to be zealous in religion. Power and patronage are sometimes given to godly men. The good things of the world are sometimes to be attained by wearing a cloak of religion. And whenever this is the case, there is no lack of false zeal. Such was the zeal of Joab, when he served David. Such was the zeal of only too many Englishmen in the days of the Commonwealth, when the Puritans were in power.

There is such a thing as zeal from the *LOVE OF PRAISE*. Such was the zeal of Jehu, when he was putting down the worship of Baal. Remember how he met Jonadab the son of Rechab, and said, "Come with me, and see my zeal for the Lord." Such is the zeal that Bunyan refers to in Pilgrim's Progress, when he speaks of some who went "for praise" to mount Zion. Some people feed on the praise of their fellow creatures. They would rather have it from Christians than have none at all.

Ah! reader, it is a sad and humbling proof of man's corruption, that **there is no degree of self-denial and self-sacrifice to which men may not go from false motives**. It does not follow that a man's religion is true, because he "gives his body to be burned," or because he gives his "goods to feed the poor." The Apostle Paul tells us that a man may do this, and yet not have true charity. It does not follow because men go into a wilderness, and become hermits, that therefore they know what true self-denial is. It does not follow because people immure themselves in monasteries and nunneries, or become sisters of charity, and sisters of mercy, that therefore they know what true crucifixion of the flesh and self-sacrifice is, in the sight of God. All these things people may do on wrong principles. **They may do them from wrong motives—to satisfy a secret pride and love of notoriety—but not from the true motive of zeal for the glory of God!** All such zeal, let us understand, is false. It is of earth, and not of heaven.

3. Furthermore, if zeal be true, it will be **a zeal *about things according to God's mind, and sanctioned by plain examples in God's Word***. Take, for one instance, that highest and best kind of zeal—I mean **zeal for our own growth in personal holiness**. Such zeal will make a man feel incessantly that sin is the mightiest of all evils, and conformity to Christ the greatest of all blessings. It will make him feel that there is nothing which ought not to be done, in order to keep up a close walk with God. It will make him willing to cut off the right hand, or pluck out the right eye, or make any sacrifice if only he can attain a closer communion with Jesus. Is not this just what you see in the Apostle Paul? He says, "I keep under my body and bring it into subjection—lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." "I count not myself to have apprehended—but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark." (1 Cor. 9:27; Phil. 3:13, 14.)

Take, for another instance, **zeal for the salvation of souls**. Such zeal will make a man burn with desire to enlighten the darkness which covers the souls of multitudes, and to bring every man, woman, and child he sees to the knowledge of the Gospel. Is not this what you see in the Lord Jesus? It is said that He neither gave Himself, nor His disciples, leisure so much as to eat. (Mark 6:31.) Is not this what you see in the Apostle Paul? He says, "I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some." (1 Cor. 9:22.)

Take, for another instance, **zeal against evil practices**. Such zeal will make a man hate everything which God hates, and long to sweep it from the face of the earth. It will make him jealous of God's honor and glory, and look on everything which robs Him of it as an offence. Is not this what you see in Phineas, the son of Eleazar? or in Hezekiah and Josiah, when they put down idolatry?

Take, for another instance, **zeal for maintaining the doctrines of the Gospel**. Such zeal will make a man hate unscriptural teaching, just as he hates sin. It will make him regard religious error as a pestilence which must be checked, whatever may be the cost. It will make him scrupulously careful about every jot and tittle of the counsel of God, lest by some omission the whole Gospel should be spoiled. Is not this what you see in Paul at Antioch, when he withstood Peter to the face, and said he was to be blamed? (Gal. 2:11.) These are the kind of things about which true zeal is employed. Such zeal, let us understand, is honorable before God.

4. Furthermore, if zeal be true, it will be **a zeal *tempered with charity and love***. It will not be a bitter zeal. It will not be a fierce

enmity against people. It will not be a zeal ready to take the sword, and to smite with carnal weapons. The weapons of true zeal are not carnal—but spiritual. True zeal will hate sin—and yet love the sinner. True zeal will hate heresy—and yet love the heretic. True zeal will long to break the idol—but deeply pity the idolater. True zeal will abhor every kind of wickedness—but labor to do good, even to the vilest of transgressors. True zeal will warn as Paul warned the Galatians—and yet feel tenderly as a nurse, or a mother over erring children. It will expose false teachers, as Jesus did the Scribes and Pharisees—and yet weep tenderly, as Jesus did over Jerusalem, when He came near to it for the last time. True zeal will be decided as a surgeon dealing with a diseased limb—but true zeal will be gentle as one that is dressing the wounds of a brother. True zeal will speak truth boldly, like Athanasius, against the world, and not care who is offended—but true zeal will endeavor in all its speaking, to speak the truth in love.

5. Furthermore, **if zeal be true, *it will be joined to a deep humility***. A truly zealous man will be the last to discover the greatness of his own attainments. All that he is and does will come so immensely short of his own desires, that he will be filled with a sense of his own unprofitableness, and amazed to think that God should work by him at all. Like Moses, when he came down from the mount, he will not know that his face shines. Like the righteous, in the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew, he will not be aware of his own good works.

Buchanan is one whose praise is in all the Churches. He was one of the first to take up the cause of the perishing heathen. He literally spent himself, body and mind, in laboring to arouse sleeping Christians to see the importance of missions. Yet he says in one of his letters, "I do not know that I ever had what Christians call zeal."

Whitefield was one of the most zealous preachers of the Gospel the world has ever seen. Fervent in spirit, instant in season and out of season, he was a burning and a shining light, and turned thousands to God. Yet he says, after preaching for thirty years, "Lord help me to begin to begin."

M'Cheyne was one of the greatest blessings that God ever gave to the Church of Scotland. He was a minister insatiably desirous of the salvation of souls. Few men ever did so much good as he did, though he died at the age of twenty-nine. Yet he says in one of his letters, "None but God knows what an abyss of corruption is in my heart. It is perfectly amazing that ever God could bless such a ministry." Ah, reader, where there is self-conceit, there is little true zeal!

Reader, I ask you particularly to remember the description of true zeal, which I have just given—

zeal according to knowledge;

zeal from true motives;

zeal warranted by Scriptural examples;

zeal tempered with charity;

zeal accompanied by deep humility;

this is true genuine zeal—this is the kind of zeal which God approves. Of such zeal, you and I never need fear having too much.

I ask you to remember the description, because of the times in which you live. Beware of supposing that sincerity alone can ever make up true zeal—that earnestness, however ignorant, makes a man a really zealous Christian in the sight of God. There is a generation in these days which makes an idol of what it is pleased to call *"earnestness"* in religion. These men will allow no fault to be found with an *"earnest man."* Whatever his theological opinions may be—if he be but an earnest man, that is enough for these people, and we are to ask no more. They tell you we have nothing to do with minute points of doctrine, and with questions of words and names, about which Christians are not agreed. Is the man an earnest man? If he is, we ought to be satisfied. Earnestness in their eyes covers over a multitude of sins. I warn you solemnly to beware of this specious doctrine. In the name of the Gospel, and in the name of the Bible, I enter my protest against the theory, that mere earnestness can make a man a truly zealous and pious man in the sight of God.

These *idolaters of earnestness* would make out that God has given us no standard of truth and error, or that the true standard, the Bible, is so obscure, that no man can find out what truth is by simply going to it. They pour contempt upon the Word, the written Word, and therefore they must be wrong.

These *idolaters of earnestness* would make us condemn every witness for the truth, and every opponent of false teaching, from the time of the Lord Jesus down to this day. The Scribes and Pharisees were in earnest, and yet our Lord opposed them. And shall we dare even to hint a suspicion that they ought to have been let alone? Queen Mary, and Bonner, and Gardiner were in earnest in restoring Popery, and trying to put down Protestantism, and yet Ridley and Latimer opposed them to the death. And shall we dare to say that as both parties were in earnest, both were in the right? Devil-worshipers and idolaters at this day are in earnest, and yet our missionaries labor to expose their errors. And shall we dare to say that earnestness would take them to heaven, and that missionaries to heathen and Roman Catholics had better stay at home? Are we really going to admit that the Bible does not show us what is truth? Are we really going to put a mere vague thing called "earnestness," in the place of Christ, and to maintain that no earnest man can be wrong? God forbid that we should give place to such doctrine! I shrink with horror from such theology. I warn you solemnly to beware of being carried away by it, for it is common and most seductive in this day. Beware of it, for it is only a new form of an old error—that old error which says that a man "Can't be wrong whose life is in the right." Admire zeal. Seek after zeal. Encourage zeal. But see that your own zeal be true. See that the zeal, which you admire in others, be a zeal "according to knowledge,"—a zeal from right motives—a zeal that can bring chapter and verse out of the Bible for its foundation. Any zeal but this is but a false fire. It is not lighted by the Holy Spirit.

III. I pass on now to the third thing I proposed to speak of. Let me show you ***WHY it is good for a man to be zealous.***

It is certain that God never gave a man a commandment which it was not man's interest, as well as duty, to obey. He never set a grace before His believing people which His people will not find it their highest happiness to follow after. This is true of all the graces of the Christian character. Perhaps it is pre-eminently true in the case of zeal.

Zeal is good for a Christian's own soul. We all know that exercise is good for the health, and that regular employment of our muscles and limbs promotes our bodily comfort, and increases our bodily vigor. Now that which exercise does for our bodies, zeal will do for our souls. It will help mightily to promote inward feelings of joy, peace, comfort, and happiness. None have so much enjoyment of Christ as those who are ever zealous for His glory—jealous over their own walk—tender over their own consciences—full of anxiety about the souls of others—and ever watching, working, laboring, striving, and toiling to extend the knowledge of Jesus Christ upon earth. Such men live in the full light of the sun, and therefore their hearts are always warm. Such men water others, and therefore they are watered themselves. Their hearts are like a garden daily refreshed by the dew of the Holy Spirit. They honor God, and so God honors them.

I would not be mistaken in saying this. I would not appear to speak slightingly of any believer. I know that the Lord takes pleasure in all His people. There is not one, from the least to the greatest—from the smallest child in the kingdom of God, to the oldest warrior in the battle against Satan—there is not one in whom the Lord Jesus Christ does not take great pleasure. We are all His children—and however weak and feeble some of us may be, as a father pities his children, so does the Lord pity those who love and fear Him. We are all plants of His own planting—and though many of us are poor, weakly exotics, scarcely keeping life together in a foreign soil—yet as the gardener loves that which his hands have raised, so does the Lord Jesus love the poor sinners who trust in Him.

But while I say this, I do also believe that the Lord takes special pleasure in those who are zealous for Him—in those who give themselves, body, soul and spirit, to extend His glory in this world. To them He reveals Himself, as He does not to others. To them He shows things that other men never see. He blesses the work of their hands. He cheers them with spiritual consolations, which others only know by the hearing of the ear. They are men after His own heart, for they are men more like Himself than others. None have such joy and peace in believing—none have such sensible comfort in their religion, none have so much of heaven upon earth—none see and feel so much of the consolations of the Gospel as those who are zealous, earnest, thorough-going, devoted Christians. For the sake of our own souls, if there were no other reason, it is good to be zealous—to be very zealous in our religion.

Reader, as zeal is good for ourselves individually, so it is also***good for the professing Church of Christ generally***. Nothing so much keeps alive true religion as a leaven of zealous Christians scattered to and fro throughout a Church. Like salt, they prevent the whole body falling into a state of corruption. None but men of this kind can revive Churches when ready to die. It is impossible to over-estimate the debt that all Christians owe to zeal. The greatest mistake the rulers of a Church can make, is to drive zealous men out of its pale. By so doing, they drain out the life-blood of the system, and hasten on ecclesiastical decline and death.

Zeal is in truth that grace which God seems to delight to honor. Look through the list of Christians who have been eminent for usefulness. Who are the men that have left the deepest and most indelible marks on the Church of their day? Who are the men that God has generally honored to build up the walls of His Zion, and turn the battle from the gate? Not so much men of learning and literary talents—as men of zeal.

Latimer was not such a deeply read scholar as Cranmer or Ridley. He could not quote Fathers from memory as they did. He refused to be drawn into arguments about antiquity. He stuck to his Bible. Yet it is not too much to say that no English reformer made such a lasting impression on the nation as old Latimer did. And what was the reason? His simple zeal.

Baxter, the puritan, was not equal to some of his contemporaries in intellectual gifts. It is no disparagement to say that he does not stand on a level with Manton or Owen. Yet few men probably exercised so wide an influence on the generation in which he lived. And what was the reason? His burning zeal.

Whitefield, and Wesley, and Berridge, and Venn were inferior in mental attainments to Butler and Watson. But they produced effects on the people of this country which fifty Butlers and Watsons would probably never have produced. They saved the Church of England from ruin. And what was one secret of their power? Their zeal.

These men stood forward at turning points in the history of the Church. They bore unmoved storms of opposition and persecution. They were not afraid to stand alone. They cared not though their motives were misinterpreted. They counted all things but loss for the truth's sake. They were each and all eminently *men of one thing*—and that one thing was to advance the glory of God, and to maintain His truth in the world. They were all fire—and so they lighted others. They were wide awake—and so they awakened others. They were all alive—and so they quickened others. They were always working—and so they shamed others into working too. They came down upon men like Moses from the mount. They shone as if they had been in the presence of God. They carried to and fro with them, as they walked their course through the world, something of the atmosphere and savor of heaven itself.

There is a sense in which it may be said that zeal is contagious. Nothing is more useful to the professors of Christianity than to see a real live Christian—a thoroughly zealous man of God. They may rail at him. They may carp at him. They may pick holes in his conduct. They may look bewildered upon him. They may not understand him—but insensibly a zealous man does them good. He opens their eyes. He makes them feel their own sleepiness. He makes their own great darkness visible. He obliges them to see their own barrenness. He compels them to think, whether they like it or not—"What are we doing? Are we no better than mere cumberers of the ground?" It may be sadly true that "one sinner *destroys* much good!" but it is also a blessed truth that one zealous Christian can *do* much good. Yes! one single zealous man in a town—one zealous man in a congregation—one zealous man in a Society—one zealous man in a family, may be a great, a most extensive blessing. How many machines of usefulness such a man sets a going! How much Christian activity he often calls into being which would otherwise have slept! How many fountains he opens which would otherwise have been sealed! Verily there is a deep mine of truth in those words of the Apostle Paul to the Corinthians, "Your zeal has provoked very many." (2 Cor. 9:2.)

But, as zeal is good for the Church and for individuals, so **zeal is *good for the world***. Where would the Missionary work be if it were not for zeal? Where would our City Missions and Ragged Schools be if it were not for zeal? Where would our District-Visiting and Pastoral-Aid Societies be if it were not for zeal? Where would be our Societies for rooting out sin and ignorance, for finding out the dark places of the earth, and recovering poor lost souls? Where would be all these glorious instruments for good if it were not for Christian zeal? Zeal called these institutions into being, and zeal keeps them at work when they have begun. Zeal gathers a few despised men, and makes them the nucleus of many a powerful Society. Zeal keeps up the collections of a Society when it is formed. Zeal prevents men from becoming lazy and sleepy when the machine has grown large, and begins to get favor from the world. Zeal

raises up men to go forth, putting their lives in their hands, like Moffat and Williams in our own day. Zeal supplies their place when they are gathered into the barn, and raises up a constant succession of laborers to do the Lord's work.

What would become of the ignorant masses who crowd the lanes and allies of overgrown cities, if it were not for Christian zeal? Governments can do nothing with them—they cannot make laws that will meet the evil. The vast majority of professing Christians have no eyes to see it; like the priest and Levite, they pass by on the other side. But **zeal has eyes to see, and a heart to feel, and a head to devise, and a tongue to plead, and hands to work, and feet to travel, in order to rescue poor souls, and raise them from their low estate.** Zeal does not stand poring over difficulties—but simply says, "Here are souls perishing, and something *shall* be done." Zeal does not shrink back because there are Anakims in the way—it looks over their heads, like Moses on Pisgah, and says, "The land *shall* be possessed." Zeal does not wait for company, and tarry until good works are fashionable—it goes forward like a forlorn hope, and trusts that others will follow by and by. Ah, reader, the world little knows what a debt it owes to Christian zeal! How much crime it has checked! How much sedition it has prevented! How much public discontent it has calmed! How much obedience to law and love of order it has produced! How many souls it has saved! Yes—and I believe we little know what might be done if every Christian was a zealous man. How much if ministers were more like Bickersteth, and Whitefield, and M'Cheyne! How much if layman were more like Howard, and Wilberforce, and Thornton, and Nasmith! Oh, for the world's sake, as well as your own, resolve, labor, strive to be zealous Christians!

Beware, I beseech you, of checking zeal. Seek it. Cultivate it. Try to blow up the fire in your own heart, and the hearts of others—but never, never check it. Beware of throwing cold water on zealous souls, whenever you meet with them. Beware of nipping in the bud this precious grace when first it shoots. If you are a parent beware of checking it in your children—if you are a husband, beware of checking it in your wife—if you are a brother, beware of checking it in your sisters—and if you are a minister, beware of checking it in the members of your congregation. It is a shoot of heaven's own planting. Beware of crushing it, for Christ's sake.

Zeal may make mistakes. Zeal may need directing. Zeal may need guiding, controlling, and advising. Like the elephants on ancient fields of battle, it may sometimes do injury to its own side. But zeal does not need damping in a wretched, cold, corrupt, miserable world like this. Zeal, like John Knox pulling down the Scotch monasteries, may hurt the feelings of narrow-minded and sleepy Christians. It may offend the prejudices of those old-fashioned religionists, who hate everything new, and abhor all change. But zeal, in the end, will be justified by its results. Zeal, like John Knox, in the long run of life, will do infinitely more good than harm. Oh, reader, there is little danger of there being too much zeal for the glory of God. God forgive those who think there is! You know little of human nature. You forget that sickness is far more contagious than health, and that it is much easier to catch a cold than impart a glow. Depend upon it, the Church seldom needs a bridle—but often needs a spur. It seldom needs to be checked—but often needs to be urged on.

And now, in conclusion, let me try to **APPLY** this subject to the conscience of every person who reads this volume. It is a warning subject—an arousing subject—an encouraging subject—according to the state of our several hearts. I wish by God's help to give every reader his portion.

1. First of all let me offer *a warning* to all who make no decided profession of religion. There are thousands and tens of thousands, I fear, in this condition. Reader, if you are one, the subject before you is full of solemn warning. Oh, that the Lord in mercy may incline your heart to receive it!

I ask you then in all affection, Where is your zeal in religion? With the Bible before me, I may well be bold in asking. But with your life before me, I may well tremble as to the answer. I ask again, Where is your zeal for the glory of God? Where is your zeal for extending Christ's Gospel through an evil world? Zeal, which was the characteristic of the Lord Jesus—zeal, which is the characteristic of the angels—zeal, which shines forth in all the brightest Christians; where is your zeal, unconverted reader—where is your zeal indeed? You know well it is nowhere at all. You know well you see no beauty in it. You know well it is scorned and cast out as evil by you and your companions. You know well it has no place, no portion, no standing ground, in the religion of your soul. It is not that you know not what it is to be zealous. You have zeal—but it is all misapplied. It is all earthly. It is all about the things of time. It is not zeal for the glory of God. It is not zeal for the salvation of souls. Yes! many a man has zeal for the newspaper—but not for the Bible—zeal for the daily reading of the "Times," but no zeal for the daily reading of God's blessed Word. Many a man has zeal for the account book and the business book—but no zeal about the Book of Life, and the last great account; zeal about Australian and Californian gold—but no zeal about the unsearchable riches of Christ. Many a man has zeal about his earthly concerns—his family, his pleasures, his daily pursuits—but no zeal about God, and heaven, and eternity.

Reader, if this is your case, awake, I do beseech you, to see your gross *folly*. You cannot live forever. You are not ready to die. You are utterly unfit for the company of saints and angels. Awake! be zealous and repent. Awake to see the harm you are doing. You are putting arguments in the hands of infidels by your shameful coldness. You are pulling down as fast as ministers build. You are helping the devil. Awake! be zealous, and repent. Awake to see your childish *inconsistency*. What can be more worthy of zeal than eternal things—than the glory of God—than the salvation of souls? Surely if it is good to labor for rewards that are temporal, it is a thousand times better to labor for those that are eternal. Awake! be zealous, and repent. Go and read that long-neglected Bible. Take up that blessed Book which you have, and perhaps never use. Read that New Testament through. Do you find nothing there to make you zealous, to make you earnest about your soul? Go and look at the cross of Christ. Go and see how the Son of God there shed His precious blood for you—how He suffered and groaned, and died for you. how He poured out His soul as an offering for sin, in order that you, sinful brother or sister, might not perish—but have eternal life. Go and look at the cross of Christ, and never rest until you feel some zeal for your own soul—some zeal for the glory of God—some zeal for extension of the Gospel throughout the world.

2. Let me, in the next place, say something to *arouse* those who make a profession of being decided Christians, and are yet lukewarm in their practice. There are only too many, I regret to say, in this state of soul. Reader, if you are one, there is much in this subject which ought to lead you to searchings of heart.

Let me speak to your conscience. To you also I desire to put the question in all brotherly affection, Where is your zeal? Where is your zeal for the glory of God, and for extending the Gospel throughout the world? You know well, that it is very low. You know well, that your zeal is a little feeble glimmering spark, that just lives, and no more—it is like a thing ready to die. Surely there is a fault somewhere, if this is the case. This state of things ought not to be. You, the child of God—you, redeemed at so glorious a price—you,

ransomed with such precious blood—you, who are an heir of glory such as no tongue ever yet told, or eye saw; surely you ought to be a man of another kind. Surely your zeal ought not to be so small.

I deeply feel that this is a painful subject to touch upon. I do it with reluctance, and with a constant remembrance of my own unprofitableness. Nevertheless truth ought to be spoken. The plain truth is, that many believers in the present day seem so dreadfully afraid of doing harm that they hardly ever dare to do good. There are many who are fruitful in objections—but barren in actions; rich in wet blankets—but poor in anything like Christian fire. They are like the Dutch Deputies who would never allow Marlborough to venture anything, and by their excessive caution prevented many a victory being won.

Truly, in looking round the Church of Christ, a man might sometimes think that God's kingdom had come, and God's will was being done upon earth, so small is the zeal that some believers show. It is vain to deny it. I need not go far for evidence. I point to Societies for doing good to the heathen, the colonies, and the dark places of our own land, languishing and standing still for lack of active support. I ask *is this zeal?* I point to thousands of miserable guinea subscriptions which are never missed by the givers, and yet make up the sum of their Christian liberality. I ask *is this zeal?* I point to false doctrine allowed to grow up in parishes and families without an effort being made to check it, while so-called believers look on, and content themselves with wishing it was not so. I ask *is this zeal?* Would the Apostles have been satisfied with such a state of things? We know they would not.

Reader, if your conscience pleads guilty to any participation in the short-comings I have spoken of, I call upon you, in the name of the Lord, to awake, be zealous, and repent. Let not zeal be confined to banks, and shops, and counting-houses. Let us see the same zeal in the Church of Christ. Let not zeal be abundant to get gold from Australi—but defective to send the Gospel to the heathen, or to pluck Roman Catholics like brands from the fire, or to enlighten the dark places of the colonies of this great land. Never were there such doors of usefulness opened—never were there so many opportunities for doing good.

I loathe that squeamishness which refuses to help religious works if there is a blemish about the instrument by which the work is carried on. At this rate we might never do anything at all. Resist the feeling, reader, if you are tempted by it. It is one of Satan's devices. It is better to work with feeble instruments than not to work at all. At all events, try to do something for God and Christ—something against ignorance and sin. Give, collect, teach, exhort, visit, pray, according as God enables you. Only make up your mind that all can do something, and resolve that by you, at any rate, something shall be done. If you have only one talent, do not bury it in the ground. **Try to live so as to be missed. There is far more to be done in twelve hours than most of us have ever yet done on any day in our lives.**

Think of the ***precious souls*** **which are perishing**, while you are sleeping. Be taken up with your inward conflicts if you will. Go on anatomizing your own feelings, and poring over your own corruptions, if you are so determined. But remember all this time souls are going to hell, and you might do something to save them by working, by giving, by writing, by begging, and by prayer. Oh, awake, be zealous, and repent.

Think of the ***shortness of time***. You will soon be gone. You will have no opportunity for works of mercy in another world. In heaven there will be no ignorant people to instruct, and no unconverted to reclaim. Whatever you do must be done now. Oh, when are you going to begin? Awake! be zealous, and repent.

Think of ***the devil***, and his zeal to do harm. It was a solemn saying of old Bernard when he said that "Satan would rise up in judgment against some people at the last day, because he had shown more zeal to ruin souls than they had to save them." Awake! be zealous, and repent.

Think of ***your Savior***, and all His zeal for you. Think of Him in Gethsemane and on Calvary, shedding His blood for sinners. Think of His life and death—His sufferings and His doings. This He has done for you. What are you doing for Him? Oh, resolve that for the time to come you will spend and be spent for Christ. Awake! be zealous, and repent.

3. Last of all let me encourage all readers of these pages who are truly zealous Christians.

I have but one request to make, and that is *that you will persevere*. I do beseech you to hold fast your zeal, and never let it go. I do beseech you never to go back from your first works, never to leave your first love, never to let it be said of you that your first things were better than your last. Beware of cooling down. You have only to be lazy and sit still—and you will soon lose all your warmth. You will soon become another man from what you are now. Oh, reader! do not think this a needless exhortation.

It may be very true that wise young believers are very rare. But it is no less true that zealous old believers are very rare also. Never allow yourself to think that you can do too much—that you can spend and be spent too much for Christ's cause. For one man that does too much I will show you a thousand who do not do enough. Rather think that the night comes, when no man can work—and give, collect, teach, visit, work, pray, as if you were doing it for the last time. Lay to heart the words of that noble-minded Jansenist, who said when told that he ought to rest a little, "What should we rest for? have we not all eternity to rest in?"

Fear not the reproach of men. Faint not because you are sometimes abused. Heed it not if you are sometimes called bigot, enthusiast, fanatic, mad man, and fool. There is nothing disgraceful in these titles. They have often been given to the best and wisest of men. If you are only to be zealous when you are praised for it—if the wheels of your zeal must be oiled by the world's commendation, your zeal will be but short-lived. Care not for the praise or frown of man. There is but one thing worth caring for, and that is the praise of God. There is but one question worth asking about our actions—"How will they look in the day of judgment?"

Reader, I lay these thoughts before you, and I ask you seriously to consider them.

If you are not yet a zealous man, I pray that God may make you one. If you are, I pray that your zeal may increase more and more to your life's end.

FAITH!

by J. C. Ryle

"God so loved the world, that he gave His only begotten Son, that whoever **believes** in him should not perish—but have everlasting life." John 3:16

There are few texts better known than that which heads this page. Its words are probably familiar to our ears. We have very likely heard them, or read them, or quoted them, a hundred times. But have we ever considered what a vast amount of divinity this text contains? No wonder that Luther called it "the Bible in miniature!" And have we ever considered the word which forms the turning-point of the text, and the immensely solemn question which arises out of it? The word I refer to is "believes." The Lord Jesus says, "Whoever believes shall not perish." Now, do we believe?

Questions about religion are seldom popular. They frighten people. They oblige them to look within, and to think. The insolvent tradesman does not like his books to be searched. The faithless steward does not like his accounts to be examined. And the unconverted Christian does not like to be asked personal questions about his soul.

But questions about religion are very useful. The Lord Jesus Christ asked many questions during His ministry on earth. The servant of Christ ought not to be ashamed to do likewise. Questions about things necessary to salvation—questions which probe the conscience, and bring people face to face with God—such questions often bring life and health to souls. I know few questions more important than the one which arises out of this text—do we believe?

The question before us is no easy one to answer. It will not do to thrust it aside by the off-hand answer, "Of course I believe." True belief is no such "matter of course" as many suppose. Myriads of Protestants and Roman Catholics are constantly saying on Sundays, "I believe," who know nothing whatever of believing. They cannot explain what they mean. They neither know what, nor in whom, they believe. They can give no account of their faith. A belief of this kind is utterly useless. It can neither satisfy, nor sanctify, nor save.

In order to see clearly the importance of "believing," we should ponder well the words of Christ which head this paper. It is by the unfolding of these words, that I shall hope to show the weight of the question, "Do you believe?"

There are four things which I wish to consider, and to impress upon the minds of all who read this volume. These four things are as follows—

I. God's mind towards the world—He "loved" it.

II. God's gift to the world, "He gave His only begotten Son."

III. The only way to obtain the benefit of God's gift, "Whoever believes on Him shall not perish."

IV. The marks by which true belief may be known.

I. Let us consider, in the first place, **God's mind towards the world—He "loved" it.**

The extent of the Father's love towards the world, is a subject on which there is some difference of opinion. It is a subject on which I have long taken my side, and will never hesitate to speak my mind. I believe that the Bible teaches us that God's love extends to all mankind. "His tender mercies are over all His works." (Psalm 145:9.) He did not love the Jews only—but the Gentiles also. He does not love His own elect only. He loves all the world.

But what kind of love is this with which the Father regards all mankind? It cannot be a love of delight, or else He would cease to be a perfect God. He is one who "cannot look upon that which is iniquity." (Hab. 1:13.) Oh, no! The world-wide love of which Jesus speaks, is a love of kindness, pity, and compassion. Fallen as man is, and provoking as man's ways are, the heart of God is full of kindness towards him. While as a righteous Judge He hates sin, He is yet able in a certain sense to love sinners! The length and breadth of His compassion are not to be measured by our feeble measures. We are not to suppose that He is such an one as ourselves. Righteous, and holy, and pure as God is, it is yet possible for God to love all mankind. "His compassions fail not." (Lam. 3:22.)

Let us think, for a moment, how wonderful is this extent of God's love. Look at the state of mankind in every part of the earth, and mark the amazing quantity of wickedness and ungodliness by which earth is defiled. Look at the millions of heathen worshiping stocks and stones, and living in a spiritual darkness "that may be felt"—Look at the millions of Roman Catholics, burying the truth under man-made traditions, and giving the honor due to Christ—to the church, the saints, and the priest. Look at the millions of Protestants who are content with a mere formal Christianity, and know nothing of Christian believing or Christian living, except the name. Look at the land in which we live at this very day, and mark the sins which abound even in a privileged nation like our own. Think how drunkenness, and Sabbath-breaking, and uncleanness, and lying, and swearing, and pride, and covetousness, and infidelity, are crying aloud to God from one end of Great Britain to the other. And then remember that God loves this world! No wonder that we find it written that He is" merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth." (Exod. 34:6.) He is "not willing that any should perish—but that all should come to repentance." He "would have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth." He "has no pleasure in the death of him who dies." (2 Peter 3:9; 1 Tim. 2:4; Ezek. 33:11.) There lives not the man or woman on earth whom God regards with absolute hatred or complete indifference. His mercy is like all His other attributes. It passes knowledge. God loves the world.

There are divers and strange doctrines abroad in the present day about the love of God. It is a precious truth which Satan labors hard to obscure by misrepresentation and perversion. Let us grasp it firmly, and stand on our guard.

Beware of the common idea that God the Father is an angry Being, whom sinful man can only regard with fear, and from whom he must flee to Christ for safety. Cast it aside as a baseless and unscriptural notion. Contend earnestly for all the attributes of God, for His

holiness and His justice, as well as for His love. But never allow for one moment that there is any lack of love towards sinners in any Person in the Blessed Trinity. Oh, no! Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Spirit. The Father loves, and the Son loves, and the Holy Spirit loves. When Christ came on earth, the kindness and love of God toward man appeared. (Titus 3:4.) The cross is the effect of the Father's love, and not the cause. Redemption is the result of the compassion of all three Persons in the Trinity. To place the Father and the Son in opposition one to another, is weak and crude theology. Christ died, not because God the Father hated—but because He loved the world.

Beware, again, of the common doctrine that God's love is limited and confined to His own elect, and that all the rest of mankind are passed by, neglected, and let alone. This also is a notion that will not bear examination by the light of Scripture. The father of a prodigal son can surely love and pity him, even when he is walking after his own lusts, and refusing to return home. The Maker of all things may surely love the work of His own hands with a love of compassion, even when rebellious against Him. Let us resist to the death the unscriptural doctrine of universal salvation. It is not true that all mankind will be finally saved. But let us not fly into the extreme of denying God's universal compassion. It is true that God "loves the world." Let us maintain jealously the privileges of God's elect. It is true that they are loved with a special love, and will be loved to all eternity. But let us not exclude any man or woman from the pale of God's kindness and compassion. We have no right to pare down the meaning of words when Jesus says, "God loved the world." The heart of God is far wider than that of man. There is a sense in which the Father loves all mankind.

I hold firmly the doctrine of election. I delight in the blessed truth that God has loved His own elect with an everlasting love, before the foundation of the world. But all this is beside the question before us. That question is, "How does God regard all mankind?" I reply unhesitatingly, that God loves them. God loves all the world with a 'love of compassion'.

If any reader of these pages never yet took up the service of Christ in real earnest, and has the least desire to begin now, take comfort in the truth before you. Take comfort in the thought that God the Father is a God of infinite love and compassion. Do not hang back and hesitate, under the idea that God is an angry Being, who is unwilling to receive sinners, and slow to pardon. Remember this day that love is the Father's darling attribute. In Him there is perfect justice, perfect purity, perfect wisdom, perfect knowledge, infinite power. But, above all, never forget there is in the Father a perfect love and compassion. Draw near to Him with boldness, because Jesus has made a way for you. But draw near to Him also with boldness, because it is written that "He loved the world."

If you have taken up the service of God already, never be ashamed of imitating Him whom you serve. Be full of love and kindness to all people, and full of special love to those who believe. Let there be nothing narrow, limited, contracted, stingy, or sectarian in your love. Do not only love your family and your friends—love all mankind. Love your neighbors and your fellow-countrymen. Love strangers and foreigners. Love heathen and Muhammadans. Love the worst of people with a love of pity. Love all the world. Lay aside all envy and malice—all selfishness and unkindness. To keep up such a spirit is to be no better than an infidel. "Let all your things be done with love." "Love your enemies, bless those who curse, you; do good to those who hate you," and be not weary of doing them good to your life's end. (1 Cor. 16:14; Matt. 5:44.) The world may sneer at such conduct, and call it mean and low-spirited. But this is the mind of Christ. This is the way to be like God. God loved the world.

II. The next thing I want to consider is **God's gift to the world. "He gave His only begotten Son."**

The manner in which the truth before us is stated by our Lord Jesus Christ, demands special attention. It would be well for many who talk big swelling words about "the love of God" in the present day, if they would mark the way in which the Lord Jesus sets it before us.

The love of God towards the world is not a vague, abstract idea of mercy, which we are obliged to take on trust, without any proof that it is true. It is a love which has been manifested by a mighty gift. It is a love which has been put before us in a plain, unmistakable, tangible form. God the Father was not content to sit in heaven, idly pitying and loving His fallen creatures on earth. He has given the mightiest evidence of His love towards us by a gift of unspeakable value. He has "not spared His own Son—but delivered Him up for us all." (Rom. 8:32.) He has so loved us that He has given us His only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ! A higher proof of the Father's love could not have been given.

Again, it is not written that God so loved the world that He resolved to save it—but that He so loved it that He gave Christ. His love is not displayed at the expense of His holiness and justice. It flows down from heaven to earth through one particular channel. It is set before people in one special way. It is only through Christ, by Christ, on account of Christ, and in inseparable connection with the work of Christ. Let us glory in God's love by all means. Let us proclaim to all the world that God is love. But let us carefully remember that we know little or nothing of God's love which can give us comfort, excepting in Jesus Christ. It is not written that God so loved the world that He will take all the world to heaven—but that He so loved it, that He has given His only begotten Son. He who ventures on God's love without reference to Christ, is building on a foundation of sand.

Who can estimate the value of God's gift, when He gave to the world his only begotten Son? It is something unspeakable and incomprehensible. It passes man's understanding. There are two things which man has no arithmetic to reckon, and no line to measure. One of these things is the extent of that man's loss who loses his own soul. The other is the extent of God's gift when He gave Christ to sinners. He gave no created thing for our redemption, though all the treasures of earth, and all the stars of heaven, were at His disposal. He gave no created being to be our Redeemer, though angels, principalities and powers in heavenly places, were ready to do His will. Oh, no! He gave us One who was nothing less than His own fellow, very God of very God, His only begotten Son. He who thinks lightly of man's need and man's sin, would do well to consider man's Savior. Sin must indeed be exceeding sinful, when the Father must needs give His only Son to be the sinner's Friend!

Have we ever considered to what the Father gave His only begotten Son? Was it to be received with gratitude and thankfulness by a lost and bankrupt world? Was it to reign in royal majesty on a restored earth, and put down every enemy under His feet? Was it to enter the world as a king, and to give laws to a willing and obedient people? No! The Father gave His Son to be "despised and rejected of men," to be born of a poor woman, and live a life of poverty—to be hated, persecuted, slandered, and blasphemed—to be counted a malefactor, condemned as a transgressor, and die the death of a felon. Never was there such love as this! Never such condescension! The man among ourselves who cannot stoop much and suffer much in order to do good, knows nothing of the mind of Christ.

For what end and purpose did the Father give His only begotten Son? Was it only to supply an example of self-denial and self-sacrifice? No! It was for a far higher end and purpose than this. He gave Him to be a sacrifice for man's sin, and an atonement for man's transgression. He gave Him to be crucified for our offences, and to die for the ungodly. He gave Him to bear our iniquities, and to suffer for our sins, the just for the unjust. He gave Him to be made a curse for us, that we might be redeemed from the curse of the law. He gave Him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. He gave Him to be an atoning for our sins, and not for ours only—but for the sins of the whole world. He gave Him to be a ransom for all, and to make satisfaction for our heavy debt to God by His own precious blood. (1 Pet. 3:18; Gal. 3:13; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 John 2:2; 1 Tim. 2:6; 1 Pet. 1:18, 19.) He gave Him to be the Almighty Friend of all sinners of mankind—to be their Surety and Substitute—to do for them what they never could have done for themselves—suffer what they could never have suffered—and pay what they could never have paid. All that Jesus did and suffered on earth was according to the determinate counsel and fore-knowledge of God. The chief end for which He lived and died was to provide eternal redemption for mankind.

Beware of ever losing sight of the great purpose for which Christ was given by God the Father. Let not the false teaching of modern divinity, however plausible it may sound, tempt you to forsake the old paths. Hold fast the faith once delivered to the saints—that the special object for which Christ was given was to die for sinners, and to make atonement for them by His sacrifice on the cross. Once give up this great doctrine, and there is little worth contending for in Christianity. If Christ did not really "bear our sins on the tree" as our Substitute, there is an end of all solid peace. (1 Pet, 2:24.)

Beware, again, of holding narrow and confined views of the extent of Christ's redemption. Regard Him as given by God the Father to be the common Savior for all the world. See in Him the fountain for all sin and uncleanness, to which every sinner may come boldly, drink and live. See in Him the brazen serpent set up in the midst of the camp, to which every sin-bitten soul may look and be healed. See in Him a medicine of matchless value, sufficient for the needs of all the world, and offered freely to all mankind. The way to heaven is narrow enough already, by reason of man's pride, hardness, sloth, listlessness, and unbelief. But take heed that you do not make that way more narrow than it really is.

I confess, boldly, that I hold the doctrine of 'particular redemption', in a certain sense, as strongly as anyone. I believe that none are effectually redeemed but God's elect. They, and they alone, are set free from the guilt, and power, and consequences of sin. But I hold no less strongly, that Christ's work of atonement is sufficient for all mankind. There is a sense in which He has tasted death for every man, and has taken upon Him the sin of the world. (Heb. 2:9; John 1:29.) I dare not pare down, and file away, what appear to me the plain statements of Scripture. I dare not shut a door which God seems, to my eyes, to have left open. I dare not tell any man on earth that Christ has done nothing for him, and that he has no warrant to apply boldly to Christ for salvation. I must abide by the statements of the Bible. Christ is God's gift to the whole world.

Let us observe what a giving religion true Christianity is. Gift, love, and free grace are the grand characteristics of the pure gospel. The Father loves the world and gives His only begotten Son. The Son loves us and gives Himself for us. The Father and the Son together give the Holy Spirit to all who ask. All Three Persons in the Blessed Trinity give "grace upon grace" to those who believe. Never let us be ashamed of being giving Christians if we profess to have any hope in Christ. Let us give freely, liberally, and self-denyingly, according as we have power and opportunity. Let not our love consist in nothing more than vague expressions of kindness and compassion. Let us make proof of it by actions. Let us help forward the cause of Christ on earth, by money, influence, pains, and prayer. If God so loved us as to give His Son for our souls, we should count it a privilege and not a burden, to give what we can to do good to people.

If God has given His Son to die for us, let us beware of doubting His kindness and love in any painful providence of our daily life. Let us never allow ourselves to think hard thoughts of God. Let us never suppose that He can give us anything that is not really for our good. Let us remember the words of Paul, "He who spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all—how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things." (Rom. 8:32.) Let us see in every sorrow and trouble of our earthly pilgrimage, the hand of Him who gave Christ to die for our sins. That hand can never smite us except in love. He who gave us His only begotten Son, will never withhold anything from us that is really for our good. Let us lean back on this thought and be content. Let us say to ourselves in the darkest hour of trial, "This also is ordered by Him who gave Christ to die for my sins. It cannot be wrong. It is done in love. It must be well."

III. The third thing I propose to consider, is **the way in which man obtains the benefit of God's love and Christ's salvation.** It is written that "whoever **believes** shall not perish."

The point before us is of the deepest importance. To bring it out clearly before your eyes is one great object of the paper you are now reading. God has loved the world. God has given His Son "to be the Savior of the world." (1 John 4:14.) And yet we learn from Scripture that many people in the world never reach heaven! Here at any rate is limitation. Here the gate is strait and the way narrow. Only a small remnant out of mankind obtain eternal benefit from Christ. Who then, and what are they?

Christ and His benefits are only available to **those who believe**. To believe, in the language of the New Testament, is simply to trust. Trusting and believing are the same thing. This is a doctrine repeatedly laid down in Scripture, in plain and unmistakable language. Those who will not trust or believe in Him have no part in Him. Without believing there is no salvation. It is vain to suppose that any will be saved, merely because Christ was incarnate—or because Christ is in heaven—or because they belong to Christ's Church—or because they are baptized—or because they have received the Lord's supper. All this is entirely useless to any man except he believes. Without faith, or trust, on his part, all these things together will not save his soul. We must have personal faith in Christ, personal dealings with Christ, personal transactions with Christ—or we are lost for evermore.

It is utterly false and unscriptural to say that Christ is in every man. Christ no doubt is for everyone—but Christ is not in everyone. He dwells only in those hearts which have faith; and all, unhappily, have not faith. He who believes not in the Son of God is yet in his sins, "the wrath of God abides on him." "He who believes not," says our Lord Jesus Christ in words of fearful distinctness, "he who believes not shall be damned." (Mark 16:16; John 3:36.)

But Christ and all His benefits are the property of anyone of mankind who believes. Everyone who believes on the Son of God, and trusts his soul to Him, is at once pardoned, forgiven, justified, counted righteous, reckoned innocent, and freed from all liability to

condemnation. His sins, however many, are at once cleansed away by Christ's precious blood. His soul, however guilty, is at once clothed with Christ's perfect righteousness. It matters not what he may have been in time past. His sins may have been of the worst kind. His former character may be of the blackest description. But does He believe on the Son of God? This is the one question. If he does believe, he is justified from all things in the sight of God. It matters not, that he can bring to Christ nothing to recommend him—no good works, no long-proved amendments, no unmistakable repentance and change of life. But does he this day believe in Jesus Christ? This is the grand question. If he does he is at once accepted. He is accounted righteous for Christ's sake.

But what is this saving faith, which is of such matchless importance. What is the nature of this faith which gives a man such amazing privileges? This is an important question. I ask attention to the answer. Here is a rock on which many make shipwreck. There is nothing really mysterious and hard to understand about saving belief. But the whole difficulty arises from man's pride and self-righteousness. It is the very simplicity of justifying faith at which thousands stumble. They cannot understand it because they will not stoop.

Saving faith in Christ is no mere intellectual assent, or belief of the head. This is no more than the faith of devils. We may believe that there was a divine Person called Jesus Christ, who lived and died and rose again, eighteen hundred years ago, and yet never believe so as to be saved. Doubtless there must be some knowledge before we can believe. There is no true religion in ignorance. But knowledge alone is not saving faith.

Saving faith in Christ, again, is not mere feeling something about Christ. This is often no more than temporary excitement, which, like the early dew, soon passes away. We may be pricked in conscience, and feel drawings toward the Gospel, like Herod and Felix. We may even tremble and weep, and show much affection for the truth and those who profess it. And yet all this time our hearts and wills may remain utterly unchanged, and secretly chained down to the world. Doubtless there is no saving faith where there is no feeling. But feeling alone is not faith.

True belief in Christ is the unreserved trust of a heart convinced of sin, in Christ, as an all-sufficient Savior. It is the combined act of the whole man's head, conscience, heart, and will. It is often so weak and feeble at first, that he who has it cannot be persuaded that he has it. And yet, like life in the new-born infant, his belief may be real, genuine, saving, and true. The moment that the **conscience** is convinced of sin, and the **head** sees Christ to be the only One who can save, and the **heart** and **will** lay hold on the hand that Christ holds out—that moment there is saving faith. In that moment a man believes.

True belief in Christ is so immensely important that the Holy Spirit has graciously used many figures in the Bible in describing it. The Lord God knows the slowness of man to comprehend spiritual things. He has therefore multiplied forms of expression, in order to set faith fully before us. The man who cannot understand "believing" in one form of words, will perhaps understand it in another.

(1) Believing is the soul's COMING to Christ. The Lord Jesus says, "He who comes to Me shall never hunger." "Come unto Me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (John 6:35; Matt. 11:28.) Christ is that Almighty Friend, Advocate, and Physician, to whom all sinners, needing help, are commanded to apply. The believer comes to Him by faith, and is relieved.

(2) Believing is the soul's RECEIVING Christ. Paul says, "You have received Christ Jesus the Lord." (Col. 2:6.) Christ offers to come into man's heart with pardon, mercy, and grace, and to dwell there as its Peace-maker and King. He says, "I stand at the door and knock." (Rev. 3:20.) The believer hears His voice, opens the door, and admits Christ, as his Master, Priest, and King.

(3) Believing is the soul's BUILDING on Christ. Paul says, you are "built up in Him." "You are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets." (Eph. 2:20; Col. 2:7.) Christ is that sure corner-stone, that strong foundation, which alone can bear the weight of a sinful soul. The believer places his hopes for eternity on Him, and is safe. The earth may be shaken and dissolved; but he is built upon a rock, and will never be confounded.

(4) Believing is the soul's PUTTING ON Christ. Paul says, "As many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ." (Galat. 3:27.) Christ is that pure white robe which God has provided for all sinners who would enter heaven. The believer puts on this robe by faith, and is at once perfect and free from any spot in God's sight.

(5) Believing is the soul's LAYING HOLD ON Christ. Paul says, "We have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us." (Heb. 6:18.) Christ is that true city of refuge, to which the man fleeing from the avenger of blood runs, and in which he is safe. Christ is that altar which provided a sanctuary to him who laid hold on its horns. Christ is that almighty hand of mercy, which God holds out from heaven to lost and drowning sinners. The believer lays hold on this hand by faith, and is delivered from the pit of hell.

(6) Believing is the soul's EATING Christ. The Lord Jesus says, "My flesh is food indeed. He who eats of this bread shall live forever." (John 6:55, 58.) Christ is that divine food which God has provided for starving sinners. He is that divine bread which is at the same time life, nourishment, and medicine. The believer feeds on this 'bread of life' by faith. His hunger is relieved. His soul is delivered from death.

(7) Believing is the soul's DRINKING Christ. The Lord Jesus says, "My blood is drink indeed." (John 6:55.) Christ is that fountain of living water which God has opened for the use of all thirsty and sin-defiled sinners, proclaiming, "Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely." (Rev. 22:17.) The believer drinks of this living water, and his thirst is quenched.

(8) Believing is the soul's COMMITTAL OF ITSELF to Christ. Paul says, "He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day." (2 Tim. 1:12.) Christ is the appointed keeper and guardian of souls. It is His office to preserve from sin, death, hell, and the devil, anything committed to his charge. The believer places his soul in the hands of the Almighty treasure keeper, and is insured against loss to all eternity. He trusts himself to Him and is safe.

(9) Last—but not least, believing is the soul's LOOK to Christ. Paul describes the saints as "looking to Jesus." (Heb. 12:2.) The invitation of the Gospel is, "Look unto Me, and be saved." (Isai. 45:22.) Christ is that brazen serpent which God has set up in the world, for the healing of all sin-bitten souls who desire to be cured. The believer looks to Him by faith, and has life, health, and spiritual strength.

One common remark applies to all the nine expressions which I have just gone through. They all give us **the simplest idea of faith**, or believing and trusting, that man can desire. Not one of them implies the notion of anything mysterious, great, or meritorious in the act of belief. All represent it as something within reach of the weakest and feeblest sinner, and within the comprehension of the most ignorant and unlearned. Grant for a moment that a man says he cannot understand what faith in Christ is. Let him look at the nine expressions under which faith is described in Scripture, and tell me, if he can, that he cannot understand them. Surely he must allow that coming to Christ, looking to Christ, committing our souls to Christ, laying hold on Christ, are simple ideas. Then let him remember that coming, looking, and committing our souls to Christ, are, in other words, believing.

And now, if any reader of these pages desires to have peace of conscience in his religion, I entreat him to grasp firmly the great doctrine which I have tried to set before him, and never let it go. Hold fast the grand truth that saving faith is nothing but simple trust in Christ, that faith alone justifies, and that the one thing needful in order to obtain a saving interest in Christ, is to believe. No doubt repentance, holiness, and charity are excellent things. They will always *accompany* true faith. But in the matter of justification, they have nothing to do. In that matter, the one thing needful is to believe. No doubt belief is not the only grace to be found in the heart of a true Christian. But only faith gives him a saving interest in Christ. Prize that doctrine as the peculiar treasure of Christianity. Once let it go, or add anything to it, and there is an end of inward peace.

Prize the doctrine for its **suitableness** to the needs of fallen man. It places salvation within reach of the lowest and vilest sinner, if he has but heart and will to receive it. It asks him not for works, righteousness, merit, goodness, worthiness. It requires nothing of him. It strips him of all excuses. It deprives him of all pretext for despair. His sins may have been as scarlet. But will he believe? Then there is hope.

Prize the doctrine for its glorious **simplicity**. It brings eternal life near to the poor, and ignorant, and unlearned. It does not ask a man for a long confession of doctrinal orthodoxy. It does not require a store of head-knowledge, and an acquaintance with articles and creeds. Does the man, with all his ignorance, come to Christ as a sinner, and commit himself entirely to Him for salvation? Will he believe? If he will, there is hope.

Above all, prize the doctrine for the glorious breadth and fullness of its terms. It does not say "the elect" who believe, or "the rich" who believe, or "the moral" people who believe, or "the Churchman" who believes, or "the Dissenter" who believes—these, and these only shall be saved. Oh, no! it uses a word of far wider signification—It says, "**Whoever** believes, shall not perish." Whoever, whatever his past life, conduct, or character; whatever his name, rank, person, or country; whatever his denomination, and whatever place of worship he may have attended, "whoever believes in Christ shall not perish."

This is the Gospel. I marvel not that Paul wrote those words, "If we or an angel from heaven preach any other Gospel unto you than that which we have preached, let him be accursed." (Gal. 1:8.)

IV. The fourth and last thing which I propose to consider is a point of great practical importance. I wish to show you **the MARKS by which true belief in Christ may be discerned and known.**

The faith or believing of which I have spoken, is a grace of such importance, that we may naturally expect to hear of many counterfeits of it. There is a dead faith—as well as a living one it. There is a faith of devils—as well as a faith of God's elect it. There is a faith which is vain and useless—as well as a faith that justifies and saves. How shall a man know whether he has true faith? How shall he find out whether he "believes to the saving of his soul"? The thing may be found out. The Ethiopian may be known by his skin, and the leopard by his spots. True faith may always be known by certain marks. These marks are laid down unmistakably in Scripture. Let me endeavor to set down these marks in order.

(1) He who truly believes in Christ has **inward peace and hope**. It is written, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." "We who have believed enter into rest." (Rom. 5:1; Heb. 4:3.) The believer's sins are pardoned, and his iniquities taken away. His conscience is no longer burdened with the load of unpardoned transgressions. He is reconciled to God, and is one of His friends. He can look forward to death, judgment, and eternity without fear. The sting of death is taken away. When the great judgment of the last day is held, and the books are opened, there will be nothing laid to his charge. When eternity begins, he is provided for. He has a hope laid up in heaven, and a city which cannot be moved. He may not be fully sensible of all these privileges. His sense and view of them may vary greatly at different times, and be often obscured by doubts and fears. Like a child who is yet under age, though heir to a great fortune, he may not be fully aware of the value of his possessions. But with all his doubts and fears, he has a real, solid, true hope, which will bear examination, and at his best moments he will be able to say, "I feel a hope which makes me not ashamed." (Rom. 5:5.)

(2) He who truly believes in Christ has **a new heart**. It is written, "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature—old things are passed away—behold all things are become new." "To as many as received Christ, He gave power to become sons of God; who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man—but of God." "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." (2 Cor. 5:17; John 1:12, 13; 1 John 5:1.) A believer has no longer the same nature with which he was born. He is changed, renewed, and transformed after the image of his Lord and Savior. He who minds first the things of the flesh, has no saving faith. True faith and spiritual regeneration are inseparable companions. An unconverted person is not a believer!

(3) He who truly believes in Christ is **a holy person in heart and life**. It is written that God "purifies the heart by faith;" and, "Whoever has this hope in him, purifies himself." (Acts. 15:9; 1 John 3:3.) A believer loves what God loves, and hates what God hates. His heart's desire is to walk in the way of God's commandments, and to abstain from all manner of evil. His wish is to follow after the things which are just, and pure, and honest, and lovely, and of good report, and to cleanse himself from all filthiness of flesh and spirit. He falls far short of his aim in many things. He finds his daily life a constant fight with indwelling corruption. But he fights on, and resolutely refuses to serve sin. Where there is no holiness, we may be sure there is no saving faith. An unholy man is not a believer!

(4) He who truly believes on Christ **works godly works**. It is written, that "faith works by love." (Gal. 5:6.) True belief will never make a man idle, or allow him to sit still, contented with his own religion. It will stir him to do acts of love, kindness, and charity, according as he sees opportunity. It will constrain him to walk in the steps of his Master, who "went about doing good." (Acts 10:38.) In one way or another, it will make him work. The works that he does may attract no notice from the world. They may seem trifling

and insignificant to many people. But they are not forgotten by Him who notices a cup of cold water given for His sake. Where there is no working love, there is no faith. A lazy, selfish professing Christian, has no right to regard himself as a believer!

(5) He who truly believes on Christ **overcomes the world**. It is written, that "whatever is born of God overcomes the world, and this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith." (1 John 5:4.) A true believer is not ruled by the world's standard of right or wrong, of truth or error. He is independent of the world's opinion. He cares little for the world's praise. He is not moved by the world's blame. He does not seek for the world's pleasures. He is not ambitious of the world's rewards. He looks at things unseen. He sees an invisible Savior, a coming judgment, a crown of glory which never fades away. The sight of these objects makes him think comparatively little of this world. Where the world reigns in the heart, there is no saving faith. A man that is habitually conformed to the world, has no right to regard himself as a believer!

(6) He who truly believes on Christ, **has an inward testimony of his belief**. It is written, that "he who believes on the Son of God, has the witness in himself." (1 John 5:10.) The mark before us requires very delicate handling. The witness of the Spirit is unquestionably a very difficult subject. But I cannot shrink from declaring my own firm persuasion that a true believer always has inward feelings peculiar to himself—feelings which are inseparably connected with his faith, and flow from it—feelings of which unbelievers know nothing at all. He "has the Spirit of adoption," by which he regards God as a reconciled Father, and looks up to Him without fear. (Rom. 8:15.) He has the testimony of his conscience, sprinkled with Christ's blood, that weak as he is, he rests on Christ. He has hopes, joys, fears, sorrows, consolations, expectations, of which he knew nothing before he believed. He has 'soul evidences' which the world cannot understand—but which are better to him than all the books of evidence in existence. Feelings are, no doubt, very deceitful. But where there are no inward religious feelings there is no faith. **A man who knows nothing of an inward, spiritual, experimental religion—is not a true believer!**

(7) Last—but not least, he who truly believes on Christ, **has a special regard in all his religion to the person of Christ Himself**. It is written, "Unto you who believe, Christ is precious." (1 Pet. 2:7.) That text deserves especial notice. It does not say "Christianity" is precious, or the "Gospel" is precious, or "salvation" is precious—but Christ Himself. A true believer's religion does not consist in mere intellectual assent to a certain set of propositions and doctrines. It is not a mere cold belief of a certain set of truths and facts concerning Christ. It consists in union, communion, and fellowship with an actual living Person, even Jesus the Son of God. It is a life of faith in Jesus, confidence in Jesus, leaning on Jesus, drawing out of the fullness of Jesus, speaking to Jesus, working for Jesus, loving Jesus, and waiting for Jesus to come again. Paul said, "The life that I live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God." "To me to live is Christ." (Galat. 2:20; Phil. 1:21.) Such life may sound like enthusiasm to many. But where there is true faith, Christ will always be known and realized, as an actual living personal Friend. He who knows nothing of Christ as his own Priest, Physician, and Redeemer, knows nothing of saving faith!

I place these seven marks of believing before everyone who reads this paper, and I ask him to consider them well. I do not say, that all believers have them equally. I do not say, that no one will be saved who cannot discover all these marks in himself. I concede, freely, that many believers are so weak in faith, that they go doubting all their days, and make others doubt about them too. I simply say that these are the marks to which a man should first direct his attention, if he would know whether he truly believes. Where the seven marks, of which I have just been speaking, are utterly lacking, I dare not tell a man that he is a true believer. He may be called a Christian, and attend on Christian ordinances. He may have been baptized with Christian baptism, and be a member of a Christian church. But if he knows nothing of peace with God, conversion of heart, newness of life, and victory over the world, I dare not pronounce him a believer. He is yet dead in trespasses and sins. Except he awakes to newness of life, he will perish everlastingly.

Show me a man who has about him the seven marks which I have described, and I feel a strong confidence about the state of his soul. He may be poor and needy in this world—but he is rich in the sight of God. He may be despised and sneered at by man—but he is honorable in the sight of the King of kings. He is traveling towards heaven. He has a mansion ready for him in the Father's house. He is cared for by Christ, while on earth. He will be owned by Christ before assembled worlds, in the life which is to come.

CONCLUSION

(1) And now, in drawing this paper to a conclusion, I return to the **QUESTION** with which I began. I press that question on the conscience of everyone whose eyes are on this page. I ask you, in my Master's name, whether you yet know anything of the subject of it? I ask you to look my inquiry in the face. I ask you, **Do you truly believe?**

Do you truly believe? I think it impossible to over-rate the immense importance of the question before you. Life or death, heaven or hell, blessing or cursing, all hinge and turn upon it. He who believes on Christ is not condemned. He who believes not shall be damned. If you truly believe, you are pardoned, justified, accepted in God's sight, and have a title to everlasting life. If you do not believe, you are perishing daily. Your sins are all upon your head, sinking you down to perdition. Every hour you are so much nearer to hell.

Do you truly believe? It matters nothing what others are doing. The question concerns yourself. The folly of other people is no excuse for yours. The loss of heaven will not be less bitter, because you lose it in company. Look at home. Think of your own soul.

Do you truly believe? It is no answer to say, that "you sometimes hope Christ died for you." The Scriptures never tell us to spend our time in doubts and hesitation on that point. We never read of a single case of one who stood still on that ground. Salvation is never made to turn on the question, whether Christ died for a certain man or not. The turning point which is always set before us is believing.

Do you truly believe? This is the point to which all must come at last, if they would be saved. It will signify little, when we hang on the brink of the grave, what we have professed, and to what denomination we have belonged. All this will sink into nothing, in comparison with the question of this paper. All will be useless, if we have not believed.

Do you truly believe? This is the common mark of all saved souls. Episcopalians or Presbyterians, Baptists or Independents, Methodists or Plymouth Brethren, Churchmen or Dissenters—all meet on this common ground, if they are true believers. On other matters, they are often hopelessly disagreed. But in living by faith on Jesus Christ, they are all one.

Do you truly believe? What reason can you give for unbelief, that will bear examination? Life is short and uncertain. Death is sure. Judgment is inevitable. Sin is exceeding sinful. Hell is a dreadful reality. Christ alone can save you. There is no other name given under heaven, whereby you can be saved. If not saved, the blame will be on your own head. You will not believe! You will not come to Christ, that He may give you life! Take warning this day. You must either believe on Christ, or perish everlastingly. Rest not until you can give a satisfactory answer to the question before you. Never be satisfied, until you can say, By the grace of God I do believe.

(2) I pass on from questions to **COUNSEL**. I offer it to all who are convinced of sin, and dissatisfied with their own spiritual condition. I entreat you to come to Christ by faith without delay. I invite you this day to believe on Christ to the saving of your soul.

I will not let you put me off by the common objection, "We cannot believe—we must wait until God gives us faith." I grant most fully that saving faith, like true repentance, is the gift of God. I grant that we have no natural power of our own to believe on Christ, receive Christ, come to Christ, lay hold on Christ, and commit our souls to Christ. But I see faith and repentance laid down clearly in Scripture as duties which God requires at every man's hands. He "commands all people to repent." This is His commandment, that we should believe." (Acts 17:30; 1 John 3:23.) And I see it laid down with no less clearness, that unbelief and impenitence are sins for which man will be held accountable, and that he who does not repent and believe destroys his own soul. (Mark 16:16; Luke 13:3.)

Will anyone tell me that it is right for a man to sit still in sin? Will anyone say that a sinner on the road to hell ought to wait idly for some power to take him up and put him in the way to heaven? Will anyone say that it is right for a man to continue quietly serving the devil, in open rebellion against God, and that he is to make no effort, no struggle, no attempt to turn towards Christ?

Let others say these things, if they will. I cannot say them. I can find no warrant for them in Scripture. I will not waste time in trying to explain what cannot be explained, and unravel what cannot be unraveled. I will not attempt to show metaphysically in what way an unconverted man can look to Christ, or repent, or believe. But this I know, that it is my plain duty to bid every unbeliever to repent and believe. And this I know, that the man who will not accept the invitation, will find at last that he has ruined his own soul!

Trust Christ, look to Christ, cry to the Lord Jesus Christ, if you never yet believed, about your soul. If you have not the right feelings yet, ask Him to give you right feelings. If you dare not think that you have true faith yet, ask Him to give you faith. But in any case do not sit still. Do not idle away your soul into hell in ignorant unscriptural sloth. Do not live on in senseless inactivity—waiting for you know not what—expecting what you cannot explain—increasing your guilt every day—offending God by continuing in lazy unbelief—and hourly digging a grave for your own soul. Arise and call upon Christ! Awake and cry to Jesus about your soul! Whatever difficulties there may be about believing, one thing at least is abundantly clear—no man ever perished and went to hell from the foot of the cross. If you can do nothing else, lie down at the foot of the cross.

(3) I finish all by a word of **EXHORTATION** to all believers into whose hands this paper may fall. I address them as fellow-pilgrims and companions in tribulation. I exhort them, if they love life, and have found any peace in believing, to pray daily for an increase of faith. Let your prayer be continually, "Lord, increase my faith."

True faith admits of many degrees. The weakest faith is enough to join the soul to Christ, and to secure salvation. A trembling hand may receive a healing medicine. The feeblest infant may be heir to the richest possessions. The least faith gives a sinner a title to heaven, as surely as the strongest faith—if it is true faith.

But 'little faith' can never give so much sensible comfort as strong faith. According to the degree of our faith will be the degree of our peace, our hope, our strength for duty, and our patience in trial. Surely we should pray continually, "Increase our faith."

Would you have more faith? Do you find believing so pleasant that you would like to believe more? Then take heed that you are diligent in the use of every means of grace—diligent in your private communion with God—diligent in your daily watchfulness over time, temper, and tongue—diligent in your private Bible-reading—diligent in your own private prayers. It is vain to expect spiritual prosperity, when we are careless about these things. Let those who will, call it over-precise and legal to be particular about them. I only reply, that there never was an eminent saint who neglected them.

Would you have more faith? Then seek to become more acquainted with Jesus Christ. Study your blessed Savior more and more, and strive to know more of the length and breadth and height of His love. Study Him in all His offices—as the Priest, the Physician, the Redeemer, the Advocate, the Friend, the Teacher, the Shepherd of His believing people. Study Him as one who not only died for you—but is also living for you at the right hand of God—as one who not only shed His blood for you—but daily intercedes for you at the right hand of God—as one who is soon coming again for you, and will stand once more on this earth. The miner who is fully persuaded that the rope which draws him up from the pit will not break, is drawn up without anxiety and alarm. The believer who is thoroughly acquainted with the fullness of Jesus Christ—is the believer who travels from grace to glory with the greatest comfort and peace. Then let your daily prayers always contain these words, "Lord, increase my faith."

REPENTANCE

by J. C. Ryle

"Except you repent, you shall all likewise perish." Luke 13:3

The text which heads this page, at first sight, looks stern and severe, "Except you repent, you shall all perish." I can fancy someone saying, "Is this the Gospel?" "Are these the glad tidings? Are these the good news of which ministers speak?" "This is a hard saying, who can hear it?" (John 6:60.)

But from whose lips did these words come? They came from the lips of One who loves us with a love that passes knowledge, even

Jesus Christ, the Son of God. They were spoken by One who so loved us that He left heaven for our sakes—came down to earth for our sakes—lived a poor, humble life, for three and thirty years on earth for our sakes—went to the cross for us, went to the grave for us, and died for our sins. The words that come from lips like these, must surely be words of love.

And, after all, what greater proof of love can be given than to warn a friend of coming danger? The father who sees his son tottering toward the brink of a precipice, and as he sees him cries out sharply, "Stop, stop!"—does not that father love his son? The tender mother who sees her infant on the point of eating some poisonous berry, and cries out sharply, "Stop, stop! put it down!"—does not that mother love that child? It is indifference which lets people alone, and allows them to go on each in his own way. It is love, tender love, which warns, and raises the cry of alarm. The cry of "Fire—fire!" at midnight, may sometimes startle a man out of his sleep, rudely, harshly, unpleasantly. But who would complain, if that cry was the means of saving his life? The words, "Except you repent, you shall all perish," may seem at first sight stern and severe. But they are words of love, and may be the means of delivering precious souls from hell.

There are three things to which I ask attention in considering this text of Scripture.

First of all, I will speak of the **nature** of repentance—What is it?

Secondly, I will speak of the **necessity** of repentance—Why is repentance needful?

Thirdly, I will speak of the **encouragements** to repentance—What is there to lead people to repent?

I. First of all, **the NATURE of repentance—What is it?**

Let us see that we set down our feet firmly on this point. The importance of the inquiry cannot be overrated. Repentance is one of the foundation-stones of Christianity. Sixty times, at least, we find repentance spoken of in the New Testament. What was the first doctrine our Lord Jesus Christ preached? We are told that He said, "Repent, and believe the Gospel." (Mark 1:15.) What did the Apostles proclaim when the Lord sent them forth the first time? They "preached that people should repent." (Mark 6:12.) What was the charge which Jesus gave His disciples when He left the world? That "repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations." (Luke 24:47.) What was the concluding appeal of the first sermons which Peter preached? "Repent, and be baptized." "Repent you, and be converted." (Acts 2:38; 3:19.) What was the summary of doctrine which Paul gave to the Ephesian elders, when he parted from them? He told them that he had taught them publicly, and from house to house, "testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." (Acts 20:21.) What was the description which Paul gave of his own ministry, when he made his defense before Festus and Agrippa? He told them that he had taught all people that they should "repent, and do works fit for repentance." (Acts 26:20.) What was the account given by the believers at Jerusalem of the conversion of the Gentiles? When they heard of it they said, "Then has God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life." (Acts 11:18.) What is one of the first qualifications which the Church of England requires of all people that would come to the Lord's table? They are to "examine themselves whether they repent them truly of their former sins." No impenitent person, according to the Church of England, ought ever to come to the Lord's table. Surely we must all agree that these are serious considerations. They ought to show the importance of the inquiry I am now making. A mistake about repentance is a most dangerous mistake. An error about repentance is an error that lies at the very roots of our religion. What, then, is repentance? When can it be said of any man, that he repents?

Repentance is a thorough change of man's natural heart, upon the subject of **sin**. We are all born in sin. We naturally love sin. We take to sin, as soon as we can act and think—just as the bird takes to flying, and the fish takes to swimming. There never was a child that required schooling or education in order to learn deceitfulness, selfishness, passion, self-will, gluttony, pride, and foolishness. These things are not picked up from bad companions, or gradually learned by a long course of tedious instruction. They spring up of themselves, even when boys and girls are brought up alone. The seeds of them are evidently the natural product of the heart. The aptitude of all children to these evil things is an unanswerable proof of the corruption and fall of man. Now when this heart of ours is changed by the Holy Spirit, when this natural love of sin is cast out, then takes place that change which the Word of God calls "repentance." The man in whom the change is wrought is said to "repent." He may be called, in one word, a "penitent" man.

But I dare not leave the subject here. It deserves a closer and more searching investigation. It is not safe to deal in general statements, when doctrines of this kind are handled. I will try to take repentance to pieces, and dissect and analyze it before your eyes. I will show you the parts and portions of which repentance is made up. I will endeavor to set before you something of the experience of every truly penitent man.

(a) True repentance begins with KNOWLEDGE of sin. The eyes of the penitent man are opened. He sees with dismay and confusion the length and breadth of God's holy law, and the extent, the enormous extent, of his own transgressions. He discovers, to his surprise, that in thinking himself a "good sort of man," and a man with a "good heart," he has been under a huge delusion. He finds out that, in reality, he is wicked, and guilty, and corrupt, and evil in God's sight. His pride breaks down. His high thoughts melt away. He sees that he is a great sinner. This is the first step in true repentance.

(b) True repentance goes on to work SORROW for sin. The heart of a penitent man is touched with deep remorse because of his past transgressions. He is cut to the heart to think that he should have lived so madly and so wickedly. He mourns over time wasted, over talents misspent, over God dishonored, over his own soul injured. The remembrance of these things is grievous to him. The burden of these things is sometimes almost intolerable, When a man so sorrows, you have the second step in true repentance.

(c) True repentance proceeds, further, to produce CONFESSION of sin. The tongue of a penitent man is loosed. He feels he must speak to that God against whom he has sinned. Something within him tells him he must cry to God, and pray to God, and talk with God, about the state of his own soul. He must pour out his heart, and acknowledge his iniquities, at the throne of grace. They are a heavy burden within him, and he can no longer keep silence. He can keep nothing back. He will not hide anything. He goes before God, pleading nothing for himself, and willing to say, "I have sinned against heaven and before You—my iniquity is great. God be merciful to me, a sinner!" When a man goes thus to God in confession, you have the third step in true repentance.

(d) True repentance, furthermore, shows itself in a thorough BREAKING OFF from sin. The life of a penitent man is

altered. The course of his daily conduct is entirely changed. A new King reigns within his heart. He puts off the old man. What God commands he now desires to practice; and what God forbids he now desires to avoid. He strives in all ways to keep clear of sin, to fight with sin, to war with sin, to get the victory over sin. He ceases to do evil. He learns to do well. He breaks off sharply from bad ways and bad companions. He labors, however feebly, to live a new life. When a man does this, you have the fourth step in true repentance.

(e) True repentance, in the last place, shows itself by producing in the heart a settled habit of deep HATRED of all sin. The mind of a penitent man becomes a mind habitually holy. He abhors that which is evil, and cleaves to that which is good. He delights in the law of God. He comes short of his own desires not unfrequently. He finds in himself an evil principle warring against the spirit of God. He finds himself cold when he would be hot; backward when he would be forward; heavy when he would be lively in God's service. He is deeply conscious of his own infirmities. He groans under a sense of indwelling corruption. But still, for all that, the general bias of his heart is towards God, and away from evil. He can say with David, "I count all Your precepts concerning all things to be right, and I hate every false way." (Psalm. 119:128.) When a man can say this, you have the fifth, or crowning step, of true repentance.

But now, is the picture of repentance complete? Can I leave the subject here, and go on? I cannot do it. There remains yet one thing behind which ought never to be forgotten. Were I not to mention this one thing, I might make hearts sad that God would not have made sad, and raise seeming barriers between men's souls and heaven. True repentance, such as I have just described, is never alone in the heart of any man. It always has a companion—a blessed companion. It is always accompanied by **lively FAITH** in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Wherever faith is, there is repentance; wherever repentance is, there is always faith. I do not decide which comes first—whether repentance comes before faith, or faith before repentance. But I am bold to say that the two graces are never found separate, one from the other. Just as you cannot have the sun without light, or ice without cold, or fire without heat, or water without moisture—so long **you will never find true faith without true repentance, and you will never find true repentance without lively faith.** The two things will always go side by side.

And now, before I go any further, let us search and try our own hearts, and see what we know about true repentance. I do not affirm that the experience of all penitent people tallies exactly, precisely, and minutely. I do not say that any man ever knows sin, or mourns for sin, or confesses sin, or forsakes sin, or hates sin, perfectly, thoroughly, completely, and as he ought. But this I do say, that all true Christians will recognize something which they know and have felt, in the things which I have just been saying. **Repentance, such as I have described, will be, in the main, the experience of every true believer.** Search, then, and see what you know of it in your own soul.

Beware that you make no mistake about the nature of true repentance. The devil knows too well the value of that precious grace not to dress up spurious imitations of it. Wherever there is good coin there will always be bad money. Wherever there is a valuable grace, the devil will put in circulation counterfeits and shams of that grace, and try to palm them off on men's souls. Make sure that you are not deceived.

(a) Take heed that your repentance be a business of your heart. It is not a grave face, or a sanctimonious countenance, or a round of self-imposed austerities; it is not this alone which makes up true repentance towards God. The real grace is something far deeper than a mere affair of face, and clothes, and days, and forms. Ahab could put on sackcloth when it served his turn. But Ahab never repented.

(b) Take heed that your repentance be a repentance wherein you turn to God. Roman Catholics can run to priests and confessionals, when they are frightened. Felix could tremble, when he heard the Apostle Paul preach. But all this is not true repentance. See that your repentance leads you unto God, and makes you flee to Him as your best Friend.

(c) Take heed that your repentance be a repentance attended by a thorough forsaking of sin. Sentimental people can cry when they hear moving sermons on Sundays, and yet return to the ball, the theater, and the opera in the week after. Herod liked to hear John the Baptist preach, and heard him gladly, "and did many things." But feelings in religion are worse than worthless, unless they are accompanied by practice. Mere sentimental excitement, without thorough breaking off from sin, is not the repentance which God approves. (Mark 6:20.)

(d) Take heed, above all things, that your repentance is closely bound up with faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. See that your convictions are convictions which never rest except at the foot of the cross whereon Jesus Christ died. Judas Iscariot could say, "I have sinned," but Judas never turned to Jesus. Judas never looked by faith to Jesus, and therefore Judas died in his sins. Give me that conviction of sin which makes a man flee to Christ, and mourn, because by his sins he has pierced the Lord who bought him. Give me that contrition of soul under which a man feels much about Christ, and grieves to think of the despite he has done to so gracious a Savior. Going to Sinai, hearing about the ten commandments, looking at hell, thinking about the terrors of damnation—all this may make people afraid, and has its use. But no repentance ever lasts in which a man does not look at Calvary more than at Sinai, and see in a bleeding Jesus the strongest motive for contrition. Such repentance comes down from heaven. Such repentance is planted in man's heart by God the Holy Spirit.

II. I pass on now to the second point which I proposed to handle. I will consider **the NECESSITY of repentance. Why is repentance needful?**

The text which stands at the head of this paper shows clearly the necessity of repentance. The words of our Lord Jesus Christ are distinct, express, and emphatic, "Except you repent, you shall all likewise perish." All, all, without exception, need repentance toward God. It is not only necessary for thieves, murderers, drunkards, adulterers, fornicators, and the inhabitants of prisons and of jails. No—all born of Adam, all, without exception, need repentance toward God. The queen upon her throne and the pauper in the workhouse, the rich man in his drawing room, the servant maid in the kitchen, the professor of sciences at the University, the poor ignorant boy who follows the plough—all by nature need repentance. All are born in sin, and all must repent and be converted, if they would be saved. All must have their hearts changed about sin. All must repent, as well as believe the Gospel. "Except you be converted, and become as little children, you shall in no wise enter the kingdom of heaven." "Except you repent, you shall all likewise perish." (Matt. 18:3; Luke 13:3.)

But whence comes the necessity of repentance? Why is such tremendously strong language used about this necessity? What are the reasons, what the causes, why repentance is so needful?

(a) For one thing, without repentance there is no forgiveness of sins. In saying this, I must guard myself against misconstruction. I ask you emphatically not to misunderstand me. The tears of repentance wash away no sins. It is bad theology to say that they do. That is the office, that the work of the blood of Christ alone. Contrition makes no atonement for transgression. It is wretched theology to say that it does. It can do nothing of the kind. Our best repentance is a poor, imperfect thing—and needs repenting over again. Our best contrition has defects enough about it to sink us into hell. "We are counted righteous before God only for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ, by faith, and not for our own works or deservings," not for our repentance, holiness, almsgiving, sacrament receiving, or anything of the kind. All this is perfectly true.

But still it is no less true that justified people are always penitent people, and that a forgiven sinner will always be a man who mourns over, and loathes his sins. God in Christ is willing to receive rebellious man, and grant him peace, if he only come to Him in Christ's name however wicked he may have been. But God requires, and requires justly, that the rebel shall throw down his arms. The Lord Jesus Christ is ready to pity, pardon, relieve, cleanse, wash, sanctify, and fit for heaven. But the Lord Jesus Christ desires to see a man hate the sins that he wishes to be forgiven. Let some people call this "legality" if they will. Let some call it "bondage" if they please. I take my stand on Scripture. The testimony of God's Word is plain and unmistakable. Justified people are always penitent people. Without repentance there is no forgiveness of sins.

(b) For another thing, without repentance there is no happiness in the life that now is. There may be high spirits, excitement, laughter and merriment, so long as health is good, and money is in the pocket. But these things are not solid happiness. There is a conscience in all people, and that conscience must be satisfied. So long as conscience feels that sin has not been repented of and forsaken, so long it will not be quiet, and will not let a man feel comfortable within. We all of us have an inner man, unknown to the world—an inner man, with which our companions and friends have often no acquaintance. That inner man has a burden upon it, so long as sin is not repented of; and until that burden is taken off, that inner man has no real comfort. Can you and I be comfortable, when we are not in a right position? It is impossible. And what is a man's true position? He is never in his right position until he has turned his back upon sin, and turned his face towards God.

A man's house is never comfortable until all things are in order. And when is the house of the inward man in order? Never, until God is king, and the world put down in the second place; never, until God is upon the throne, and sin cast down and put out of doors. You might as well expect the solar system to go on well without the sun, as expect that heart of yours to be comfortable when God is not in His place. The great account with God must be settled. The King must be upon His throne. Then, and not until then, there will be peace within. Without repentance there can be no true happiness. We must repent if we want to be happy.

(c) For another thing, without repentance there can be no fitness for heaven in the world that is yet to come. Heaven is a prepared place, and those who go to heaven must be a prepared people. Our hearts must be in tune for the employments of heaven, or else heaven itself would be a miserable abode. Our minds must be in harmony with those of the inhabitants of heaven, or else the society of heaven would soon be intolerable to us. Gladly would I help everyone to heaven into whose hands this paper may fall. But I never would have you ignorant that if you went there with an impenitent heart, heaven would be no heaven to your soul. What could you possibly do in heaven, if you got there with a heart loving sin? To which of all the saints would you speak? By whose side would you sit down? Surely the angels of God would make no sweet music to the heart of him who cannot bear saints upon earth, and never praised the Lamb for redeeming love! Surely the company of patriarchs, and apostles, and prophets, would be no joy to that man who will not read his Bible now, and does not care to know what apostles and prophets wrote.

Oh, no! no! there can be no happiness in heaven, if we get there with an impenitent heart. The fish is not happy when it is out of water. The bird is not happy when it is confined in a cage. And why? They are all out of their proper element and natural position. And man, unconverted man, impenitent man, would not be happy if he got to heaven without a heart changed by the Holy Spirit. He would be a creature out of his proper element. He would have no faculties to enable him to enjoy his holy abode. Without a penitent heart there is no "fitness for the inheritance of the saints in light." We must repent, if we want to go to heaven. (Coloss. 1:12.)

I beseech you by the mercies of God, to lay to heart the things which I have just been saying, and to ponder them well. You live in a world of cheating, imposition, and deception. Let no man deceive you about the necessity of repentance. Oh, that professing Christians would see, and know, and feel, more than they do—the necessity, the absolute necessity, of true repentance towards God! There are many things which are not needful. Riches are not needful. Health is not needful. Fine clothes are not needful. Noble friends are not needful. The favor of the world is not needful. Gifts and learning are not needful. Millions have reached heaven without these things. Thousands are reaching heaven every year without them. But no one ever reached heaven without "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."

Let no man ever persuade you that any religion deserves to be called the Gospel, in which repentance toward God has not a most prominent place. A Gospel, indeed! That is no Gospel in which repentance is not a principal thing. A Gospel! It is the Gospel of man—but not of God. A Gospel! It comes from earth—but not from heaven. A Gospel! It is not the Gospel at all; it is rank antinomianism, and nothing else. So long as you hug your sins, and cleave to your sins, and will have your sins, so long you may talk as you please about the Gospel—but your sins are not forgiven. You may call that legal, if you like. You may say, if you please, you "hope it will be all right at the last—God is merciful—God is love—Christ has died—I hope I shall go to heaven after all." No! I tell you, it is not all right. It will never be all right, at that rate. You are trampling under foot the blood of atonement. You have as yet no part or lot in Christ. So long as you do not repent of sin, the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is no Gospel to your soul. Christ is a Savior from sin—not a Savior for man in sin. If a man will have his sins, the day will come when that merciful Savior will say to him, "Depart from Me, you worker of iniquity! Depart into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." (Matt. 25:41.)

Let no man ever delude you into supposing that you can be happy in this world without repentance. Oh, no! You may laugh and dance, and go upon vacations, and crack good jokes, and sing good songs, and say, "Cheer, boys, cheer!" and "There's a good time coming!"—but all this is no proof that you are happy. So long as you do not quarrel with sin, you will never be a truly happy man. Thousands go on for a time in this way, and seem merry before the eyes of others, and yet in their hearts carry about a lurking sorrow. When they are alone they are wretched. When they are not in jovial company they are low. Conscience makes cowards of

them. They do not like being by themselves. They hate quiet thinking. They must constantly have some new excitement. Every year they must have more. Just as an opium-eater needs a larger and larger doses—so does the man who seeks happiness in anything except in God need greater excitement every year that he lives, and after all is never really happy.

Yes! and worse than all, the longer you go on without repentance, the more unhappy will that heart of yours be. When old age creeps over you, and grey hairs appear upon your head—when you are unable to go where you once went, and take pleasure where you once took pleasure—your wretchedness and misery will break in upon you like an armed man. The more impenitent a man is, the more miserable he becomes. Have you ever heard of the great clock of St. Paul's cathedral, in London? At midday, in the roar of business, when carriages, and carts, and wagons, and omnibuses, go rolling through the streets, how many never hear that great clock strike, unless they live very near it. But when the work of the day is over, and the roar of business has passed away—when people are gone to sleep, and silence reigns in London—then at twelve, at one, at two, at three, at four, the sound of that clock may be heard for miles round. Twelve! One! Two! Three! Four! How that clock is heard by many a sleepless man! That clock is just like the conscience of the impenitent man. While he has health and strength, and goes on in the whirl of business, he will not hear conscience. He drowns and silences its voice by plunging into the world. He will not allow the inner man to speak to him. But the day will come when conscience will be heard, whether he likes it or not. The day will come when its voice will sound in his ears, and pierce him like a sword. The time will come when he must retire from the world, and lie down on the sick bed, and look death in the face. And then the clock of conscience, that solemn clock, will sound in his heart, and if he has not repented, will bring wretchedness and misery to his soul Oh, no! write it down in the tablets of your heart—without repentance no peace!

Above all, let no man make you dream that there is a possibility of reaching heaven without repentance toward God. We all want to go to heaven. A man would be justly set down as a madman, if he said that he wanted to go to hell. But never let it be forgotten, that none go to heaven except those whom the Holy Spirit has prepared for it. I make my solemn protest against those modern delusions, "that all people shall go to heaven at last—that it matters not how you live—that whether you are holy or unholy it does not matter—that whether you are godless or God-fearing, it is all the same thing, that all at last will get to heaven." I cannot find such teaching in the Bible. I find the Bible contradicting it flatly. However speciously this new idea may be propounded, and however plausibly it may be defended, it cannot stand the test of the Word of God. No! let God be true, and every man a liar. Heaven is no such place as some seem to fancy. The inhabitants of heaven are no such mixed multitude as many try to believe. They are all of one heart, and one mind. Heaven is the place to which God's people shall go. But for those who are impenitent and unbelieving, and will not come to Christ, for such the Bible says, plainly and unmistakably, there remains nothing but hell.

It is a solemn thought that an impenitent man is unfit for heaven. He could not be happy in heaven, if he got there. I remember hearing of a clergyman who many years ago was traveling by coach. He sat by the coachman's side. The coachman was one of those unhappy people who fancy nothing is to be done without swearing. He was cursing, swearing, blaspheming, taking God's name in vain, for many a long mile together. On he drove, now flying into a passion, now beating his horses, now cursing and swearing again. Such were the coachman's ways. At last the clergyman said to him quietly, "Coachman, I am exceedingly afraid for you." "Sir," said the coachman, "what should you be afraid of? All is going on right, we are not likely to be upset." "Coachman," said the clergyman again, "I am exceedingly afraid for you; because I cannot think what you would do in heaven, if you got there. There will be no cursing in heaven; there will be no swearing in heaven; there will be no passion in heaven; there will be no horses to beat in heaven." "Coachman," said the minister once more, "I can not think what you would do in heaven." "Oh," said the coachman, "that is your opinion," and no more was said. Years passed away. A day came when a person told this same clergyman that a sick man desired to see him. He was a stranger. He had come into the parish, he said, because he wanted to die there. The clergyman went to see him. He entered a room and found a dying man, whose face he did not know. "Sir," said the dying man, "you do not remember me?" "No," said the clergyman, "I do not." "Sir," said the man, "I remember you. I am that coachman to whom, many years ago, you said, 'Coachman, I am afraid for you, because I do not know what you would do if you got to heaven.' Sir, those words laid hold upon me. I saw I was not fit to die. Those words worked, and worked, and worked in my heart, and I never rested until I had repented of sin, and fled to Christ, and found peace in Him, and became a new man. And now," said he, "by the grace of God I trust I am prepared to meet my Maker, and am fit for the inheritance of the saints in light."

Once more I charge you to remember—without repentance toward God, there can be no fitness for heaven. It would give pain to an impenitent man to place him there. It would be no mercy to him. He would not be happy. He could not be happy. There could be no enjoyment in heaven to a man who got there without a heart hating sin, and a heart loving God. I expect to see many wonders at the last day. I expect to see some at the right hand of the Lord Jesus Christ, whom I once feared I would see upon the left. I expect to see some at the left hand whom I supposed to be good Christians, and expected to see at the right. But there is one thing I am sure I shall not see. I shall not see at the right hand of Jesus Christ one single impenitent man. I shall see Abraham there, who said, "I am dust and ashes." I shall see Jacob there, who said, "I am not worthy of the least of all Your mercies." I shall see Job there, who said, "I am vile." I shall see David there, who said, "I was shaped in iniquity—in sin did my mother conceive me." I shall see Isaiah there, who said, "I am a man of unclean lips." I shall see Paul there, who said, "I am the chief of sinners." (Gen. 18:27; 32:10; Job. 40:4; Psalm 51:5; Isa. 6:5; 1 Tim. 1:15.) I shall see the martyr John Bradford there, who often signed himself at the end of his letters, "That wretched sinner, that miserable sinner, John Bradford," that same John Bradford who said, whenever he saw a man going to be hanged, "There goes John Bradford—but for the grace of God." I shall see Usher there, whose last words were, "Pardon my many sins, especially my sins of omission." I shall see Grimshaw there, whose last words were, "Here goes an unprofitable servant." But they will all be of one heart, one mind, one experience. They will all have **hated** sin. They will all have **mourned** for sin. They will all have **confessed** sin. They will all have **forsaken** sin. They will all have **repented** as well as believed, repented toward God as well as believed in Jesus Christ. They will all say with one voice, "What has God wrought!" They will all say, "By the grace of God I am where I am," as well as "By the grace of God I am what I am."

III. I come now to the third and last thing of which I promised to speak. I will consider **the ENCOURAGEMENTS to repentance**. What is there to lead a man to repent?

I feel it very important to say something on this point. I know that many difficulties arise in the way when the subject of repentance is brought before us. I know how slow man is to give up sin. You might as well tell him to cut off a right hand, or pluck out a right eye, or cut off a right foot—as tell him to part with his darling sins. I know the strength of old **habits** and early ways of thinking about religion. At first they are all like cobwebs. At last they are iron chains. I know the power of pride, and that "fear of man that brings a

snare." I know the dislike there is in people to being thought a saint, and supposed to care about religion. I know that hundreds and thousands would never shrink from going to war—and yet cannot bear to be laughed at and thought ridiculous because they care for their souls. And I know, too, the malice of our great enemy, the devil. Will he part with his "lawful captives" without a conflict? Never! Will he give up his prey without a fight? Never! I once saw a lion, at the Zoological Gardens, being fed. I saw his meal cast down before him. I saw the keeper try to take that meal away. I remember the lion's roar, his spring, his struggle to retain his food. And I remember the "roaring lion that walks about, seeking whom he may devour." (1 Pet. 5:8.) Will he give up a man, and let him repent, without a struggle? Never, never, never! Man needs many encouragements to make him repent.

But there are encouragements, great, broad, wide, full and free. There are things in the Word of God which ought to nerve every heart, and arouse everyone to repent without delay. I desire to bring these things before the readers of this volume. I would not have one soul lay down this paper and say, "The thing cannot be done—it is impossible." I should like all to say, "There is hope—there is hope! There is an open door! It is possible—the thing can be done! By the grace of God a man may repent!"

(a) Hear, for one thing, what a gracious Savior the Lord Jesus Christ is. I place Him first and foremost, as the great argument to encourage a man to repentance. I say to every doubting soul, Look at Christ, think of Christ. He is one "able to save to the uttermost, all who come unto God by Him." He is one anointed "a Prince and a Savior, to give repentance as well as remission of sins." He is one who "came to seek and to save that which was lost." He is one who said, "I came not to call the righteous—but sinners to repentance." He is one who cries, "Come unto Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." He is one who has pledged His royal word, "Him who comes unto Me, I will never cast out." And He it is of whom it is written, "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to those who believe on His name." I answer all doubts, and questions, and difficulties, and objections, and fears with this simple argument. I say to everyone who wants encouragement, Look at Christ, think of Christ. Consider Jesus Christ the Lord; and then doubt about repentance no more. (Heb. 7:25; Acts 5:31; Luke 19:10; Mark 2:17; Matt. 11:28; John 6:37; John 1:12.)

(b) Hear, for another thing, what glorious promises the Word of God contains. It is written, "Whoever confesses and forsakes his sins shall find mercy." It is written again, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." It is written again, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." Surely these promises are encouragements. Again I say, doubt about repentance no more. (Prov. 28:13; 1 John 1:9; Matt. 5:3, 4, 6.)

(c) Hear, for another thing, what gracious declarations the Word of God contains, "When the wicked man turns away from his wickedness that he has committed, and does that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive." "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit—a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise." "God is not willing that any should perish—but that all should come to repentance." "As I live, says the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked—turn! Turn! Why will you die?" "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents." (Ezek. 18:27; Psalm 51:17; 2 Pet. 3:9; Ezek. 33:11; Luke 15:10.) Surely those words are encouraging, if any words can be! Again I say, doubt about repentance no more.

(d) Hear, for another thing, what marvelous parables our Lord Jesus spoke upon this subject. "Two men went up to the temple complex to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee took his stand and was praying like this: 'God, I thank You that I'm not like other people—greedy, unrighteous, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of everything I get.' "But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even raise his eyes to heaven but kept striking his chest and saying, 'God, turn Your wrath from me—a sinner!' I tell you, this one went down to his house justified rather than the other; because everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted." (Luke 23:10-14.)

Hear, again, that other marvelous parable—the parable of the prodigal son. "A man had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the estate I have coming to me.' So he distributed the assets to them. Not many days later, the younger son gathered together all he had and traveled to a distant country, where he squandered his estate in foolish living. After he had spent everything, a severe famine struck that country, and he had nothing. Then he went to work for one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. He longed to eat his fill from the carob pods the pigs were eating, but no one would give him any. When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired hands have more than enough food, and here I am dying of hunger! I'll get up, go to my father, and say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight. I'm no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired hands.' So he got up and went to his father. But while the son was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion. He ran, threw his arms around his neck, and kissed him. The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight. I'm no longer worthy to be called your son.' "But the father told his slaves, 'Quick! Bring out the best robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Then bring the fattened calf and slaughter it, and let's celebrate with a feast, because this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!' So they began to celebrate." (Luke 15:11-24.) Surely these are mighty encouragements to repentance. Again I say, doubt about repentance no more.

(e) Hear, lastly, what wonderful examples there are in the Word of God, of God's mercy and kindness to penitent people. Read the story of **David**. What sin can be greater than David's sin? But when David turned to the Lord, and said, "I have sinned against the Lord," the answer came, "The Lord has put away your sin." Read the story of **Manasseh**. What wickedness could have been greater than his? He killed his own children. He turned his back upon his father's God. He placed idols in the temple. And yet, when Manasseh was in prison and humbled himself, and prayed to the Lord, the Lord heard his prayer, and brought him out of captivity. Read the history of **Peter**. What apostasy could be greater than his? He denied his Master three times over with an oath! And yet, when Peter wept, and mourned for his sin, there was mercy even for Peter, and penitent Peter was restored to his Master's favor. Read the story of the **penitent thief**. What case could be more desperate than his? He was a dying man on the brink of hell. Yet when he said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom," at once the marvelous answer came, "Verily I say unto you, Today shall you" (even you) "be with Me in paradise." (2 Sam. 12:13; 2 Chron. 33:1-19; Mark 16:7; Luke 23:39-43.)

What greater encouragement to repentance can be imagined or conceived? Why are all these cases recorded for our learning? They are intended to lead people to repentance. They are all patterns of God's long-suffering—patterns of God's mercy—patterns of God's willingness to receive penitent sinners. They are proofs of what God's grace can do. They are a cloud of witnesses, proving that it is worth while for man to repent—that there is encouragement for man to turn to God, and that such a one as goes on still in his sins is

utterly without excuse. "The goodness of God leads him to repentance." (Rom. 2:4.)

I remember hearing of a mother whose daughter ran away from her, and lived a life of sin. For a long time no one could tell where she was. Yet that daughter came back and was reclaimed. She became a true penitent. She was taught to mourn for sin. She turned to Christ and believed in Him. Old things passed away, and all things became new. Her mother was asked one day to tell what she had done to bring her daughter back. What means had she used? What steps had she taken? Her reply was a very striking one. She said, "I prayed for her night and day." But that was not all. She went on to say, "I never went to bed at night without leaving my front door unlocked, and the door on the latch. I thought if my daughter came back some night when I was in bed, she should never be able to say that she found the door shut. She should never be able to say that she came to her mother's home—but could not get in." And so it turned out. Her daughter came back one night, and tried the door, and found the door open, and at once came in, to go out and sin no more. That open door was the saving of her soul.

That open door is a beautiful illustration of the heart of God towards sinners! The door of mercy is set wide open. The door is not yet locked. The door is always upon the latch. God's heart is full of love. God's heart is full of compassion. Whoever a man may have been, and whatever a man may have been, at midnight, at any time, whenever he returns to God, he will find God willing to receive him, ready to pardon him, and glad to have him at home. All things are ready. Whoever will, may come in.

And, out of all the millions who have turned to God and repented, who ever repented of repentance? I answer boldly, Not one! Thousands every year repent of folly and unbelief. Thousands mourn over time misspent. Thousands regret their drunkenness, and gambling, and fornication, and oaths, and idleness; and neglected opportunities. But no one has ever risen up and declared to the world that he repents of repenting and turning toward God. The steps in the narrow way of life are all in one direction. You will never see in the narrow way the step of one who turned back because the narrow way was not good.

I remember reading of a remarkable event that occurred in a place of worship where a Puritan minister, Mr. Doolittle, was preaching, two hundred years ago. Just as he was about to begin his sermon, he saw a young man, a stranger, coming into his church. He guessed by the young man's manner that he was anxious about his soul, and yet undecided about religion. He took a remarkable course with him. He tried a curious experiment—but God blessed it to the young man's soul. Before Mr. Doolittle gave out his text, he turned to an old Christian whom he saw on one side of his church. He addressed him by name, and said to him, "Brother, do you repent of having served God?" The old Christian stood up manfully before the congregation, and said, "Sir, I have served the Lord from my youth, and He has never done me anything but good." He turned to the left hand, where he saw another Christian, and addressed him in the same way. "Brother," said he, calling him by his name, "Do you repent of having served Christ? "That man also stood up manfully before the congregation, and said, "Sir, I never was truly happy until I took up the cross, and served the Lord Jesus Christ." Then Mr. Doolittle turned to the young man, and said, "Young man, will you repent? Young man, will you take up the cross? Young man, will you this day begin to serve Christ?" God sent power with these words. The young man stood up before the congregation, and said in a humble tone, "Yes sir, I will." That very day was the beginning of eternal life in the young man's soul. We may depend upon it, the two answers which Mr. Doolittle got that day are the experience of all true Christians.

We may be quite sure that no man ever repents of repentance. No man was ever sorry that he served the Lord. No man ever said at the end of his days, "I have read my Bible too much, I have thought of God too much, I have prayed too much, I have been too concerned about my soul." Oh, no! The people of God would always say, "Had I my life over again, I would walk far more closely with God than ever I have done. I am sorry that I have not served God better—but I am not sorry that I have served Him. The way of Christ may have its cross. But it is a way of pleasantness, and a path of peace." Surely that fact alone speaks volumes. It is a fact that clinches every argument which I have already advanced. Surely it is worth while for a man to repent. There are encouragements. The impenitent man is without excuse.

And now, I have brought before my readers the three points which I proposed at the outset of this paper to consider. I have shown you the **nature** of repentance toward God—the **necessity** of repentance—and the **encouragements** to repentance. It only remains to conclude this paper by a few words of **practical affectionate APPLICATION** to the souls of all who read it.

(1) My first word shall be a word of **WARNING**. I offer an affectionate warning to every impenitent soul into whose hands this volume may fall. I cannot for a moment suppose that all who read its pages are truly repentant toward God, and lively believers in Jesus Christ. I dare not think it. I cannot think it. And my first word shall be a word of warning—tender, affectionate warning, to all impenitent and unconverted people who may happen to read this paper.

What stronger warning can I give you than that which my text contains? What words can I use more solemn and more heart-searching than the words of my Lord and Master, "Except you repent, you shall all likewise perish!" Yes! you who are reading, and, as you read, know you are not yet at peace with God, you who are halting, lingering, undecided, in religion—you are the man to whom the words of the text should come with power, "Except you repent, you," even you, "shall perish!"

Oh, think what dreadful words are these! Who can measure out the full amount of what they contain? "Shall perish!" Perish in body—perish in soul—perish miserably at last in hell! I dare not attempt to paint the horrors of that thought. The worm that never dies, the fire that is not quenched, the blackness of darkness forever, the hopeless prison, the bottomless pit, the lake that burns with fire and brimstone—all, all are but feeble emblems of the reality of hell. And to this hell all impenitent people are daily traveling! Yes—from churches and chapels, from rich men's mansions and poor men's cottages, from the midst of knowledge, wealth, and respectability—all who will not repent are certainly traveling towards hell. "Except you repent, you shall all perish!"

Think how great is your **DANGER**! Where are your sins, your many sins? You know you are a sinner. You must be aware of it. It is vain to pretend you have committed no sins. And where are your sins, if you have never yet repented, never mourned for sin, never confessed sin, never fled to Christ, and never found pardon through Christ's blood? Oh, take heed to yourself. The pit opens her mouth for you. The devil is saying of you, "He will be mine!" Take heed to yourself. Remember the words of the text, "Except you repent, you shall all likewise perish." They are not my words—but Christ's words. It is not my saying—but Christ's saying. Christ says it. Christ, the merciful—Christ, the gracious says, "Except you repent, you will certainly perish."

Think again of your **GUILT**. Yes, I say, deliberately, think of your guilt. It is guilt when a man does not repent. We are responsible

and accountable to God for repentance. It is vain to say we are not. What does Paul say to the Athenians, "God commands all people everywhere to repent." (Acts 17:30.) What does our Lord say of Chorazin and Bethsaida? Why were they so guilty? Why was their position in hell to be so intolerable? Because they would not repent and believe. It is the express testimony of the Son of God that the impenitent man who has been called to repentance, and refused to obey the call, is more guilty than the man who has never been urged to repent.

Think of the **FOLLY** of remaining an impenitent man! Yes, I say the folly. The world you cleave to is melting beneath your feet already. What will bank-notes do for you in the life to come? What will your gold be worth to you a hundred years hence? When your last hour comes, what can all the gold in the globe do for you, if you die an impenitent man? You live for the world, perhaps, now. You strive hard and furiously to be successful in business. You compass sea and land to add acre to acre, or accumulate stock in the funds. You do all you can to get money, to amass riches, to make yourself comfortable, to have pleasure, to leave something for wife and children when you die. But, oh, remember! Remember, if you have not got the grace of God and true repentance, you are a poor man, a pauper in the sight of God.

I shall never forget the effect produced upon my own mind when I read some years ago of that fearful shipwreck, the loss of the 'Central America'—a great steamer which was lost on the voyage from Havannah to New York. That steamer was bringing home from California three or four hundred gold-diggers. They had all got their gold, and were coming home, proposing to spend their latter days in ease in their own country. But man proposes—and God disposes.

About twenty-four hours after the Central America left Havannah, a mighty storm arose. Three or four heavy seas in succession struck the ship, and seriously damaged her. The engines became disabled and useless, and she was tossed by the wild sea. She sprung a leak, and in spite of every effort the ship began to fill. And after a while, when all on board had pumped and baled, and baled and pumped, until they were exhausted, it became plain that the Central America, with her three or four hundred passengers and all her crew, was likely to go down into the deep, deep sea, and carry nearly all on board with her. The crew launched the only boats they had. They placed the women passengers in these boats, with just a sufficient complement of sailors to manage them. All honor be to them for their kind feeling to the weak and defenseless at a time like that! The boats put off from the vessel; but there were left behind two or three hundred people, many of them gold-diggers, when the Central America went down. One who left the ship in one of the last boats which took the women, described what he saw in the cabin of the steamer when all hope was gone, and the great ship was about to go down. People took out their gold. One said, holding his leather bag, containing his long toiled for accumulations, "Here—take it who will! Take it who will. It is no more use to me—the ship is going down. Take it who will." Others took out their gold, and scattered it all over. "There," they said, "take it—take it who will! We are all going down. There is no more chance for us. The gold will do us no good!"

Oh, what a comment that is on the truly valueless nature of riches when a man draws near to God! "Riches profit not in the day of wrath—but righteousness delivers from death." (Prov. 11:4.) Think of your **folly**—your folly as well as your **danger**, your folly as well as your **guilt**—if you will cleave to your sins. Think of your folly, if you will not hear the warning which I give you this day. In my Master's name, I say to you once more, "Except you repent," you, even you who are reading this paper, "you shall likewise perish!"

(2) My second word of application shall be an **INVITATION** to all who feel their sins and desire to repent, and yet know not what to do. I give it broadly and fully to all who ask me, "What shall I do, this very day, if I am to take your advice?" I answer that question without any hesitation. I say to you, in my Master's name, Repent, Repent, Repent this very day. Repent without delay.

I feel no difficulty in saying this. I cannot agree with those who say that unconverted people should not be told to repent or pray. I find the Apostle Peter saying to Simon Magus, "Repent of this your wickedness." I find him saying, "pray to the Lord that the intent of your heart may be forgiven you." (Acts 8:22.) I am content to follow in the Apostle's wake. I say the same to everyone who is anxious about his soul. I say, Repent, Repent, Repent without delay. The time will soon come when you must be decided, if you ever mean to be. Why not this very day? Why not tonight? Sermon-hearing cannot go on forever. Going to churches and chapels must have an end. Liking this minister and liking that minister, belonging to this church and belonging to that chapel, holding these views and holding those views, thinking this preacher sound and that preacher unsound, is not enough to save a soul. A man must act at last, as well as think, if he means to go to heaven. A man must break off from his sins, and flee to the Lord Jesus, if he does not intend to be damned. A man must come out from the world, and take up the cross. A man must be decided, and repent, and believe. A man must show his colors, and be on the Lord Jesus Christ's side, if he means to be saved. And why not begin all this today? Oh, Repent, Repent, Repent without delay!

Do you ask me again what you ought to do? Go, I tell you, and cry to the Lord Jesus Christ this very day. Go and pour out your heart before Him. Go and tell Him what you are—and tell Him what you desire. Tell Him you are a sinner—He will not be ashamed of you. Tell Him you want to be saved—He will hear you. Tell Him you are a poor weak creature—He will listen to you. Tell Him you do not know what to do or how to repent—He will give you His grace. He will pour out His Spirit upon you. He will hear you. He will grant your prayer. He will save your soul. There is enough in Christ, and to spare, for all the needs of all the world, for all the needs of every heart that is

unconverted, unsanctified, unbelieving, impenitent, and unrenewed.

"What is your hope?" said a man to a poor Welsh boy, who could not speak much English, and was found dying in an inn one day. "What is your hope about your soul?" What was his reply? He turned to the questioner, and said to him, in broken English, "Jesus Christ is plenty for everybody! Jesus Christ is plenty for everybody!" There was a mine of truth in those words. And well said another—a navigator who died in the Lord, "Tell them all, tell every man you meet—Christ is for every man! Jesus Christ is for every man!" Go to that Savior this day, and tell Him the needs of your soul. Go to Him, in the words of that beautiful hymn which says—

"Just as I am—without one plea,
But that Your blood was shed for me,
And that You bid me come to Thee—
O Lamb of God, I come!

"Just as I am—and waiting not
To rid my soul of one dark blot,
To You, whose blood can cleanse each spot—
O Lamb of God, I come!"

Go to the Lord Jesus in that spirit, and He will receive you. He will not refuse you. He will not despise you. He will grant you pardon, peace, everlasting life, and give you the grace of the Holy Spirit.

Do you ask me whether there is anything else you ought to do? Yes! I reply. Go and resolve to break off from every known sin. Let those who will call such advice legal—I trust I may never shrink from giving it. It never can be right to sit still in wickedness. It never can be wrong to say with Isaiah, "Cease to do evil." (Isa. 1:16.) Whatever be your sin, resolve, by God's help, that tomorrow morning you will rise an altered man, and break off from that sin. Whether it be drinking or swearing, or passion, or lying, or cheating, or covetousness; whatever your sin and fault—determine, by God's grace, that you will break off immediately from it. Give it up without delay, and turn from it, by God's help, for the rest of your days. Cast it from you—it is a serpent that will bite you to death. Throw it from you—it is useless lumber; it will sink the ship down to perdition. Cast away your besetting sin—give it up—turn from it—break it off. By God's help resolve that in that respect you will sin no more.

But I think it just possible that some reader of this volume may be ashamed of repentance. I do beseech you to cast away such shame for ever. Never be ashamed of repentance toward God. Of sin you might be ashamed. Of lying, swearing, drunkenness, gambling—of these a man ought to be ashamed. But of repentance, of prayer, of faith in Christ, of seeking God, of caring for the soul—never, never, so long as you live, never be ashamed of such things as these. I remember, long ago, a thing that came under my own knowledge, which gave me some idea what the fear of man can do. I was attending a dying man, who had been a sergeant in the Guards. He had ruined his health by drinking liquor. He had been a careless, thoughtless man about his soul. He told me upon his death-bed, that when he first began to pray he was so ashamed of his wife knowing it, that when he went upstairs to pray he would take his shoes off and creep up in his stockings, that his wife might not be aware how he was spending his time. Verily, I am afraid there are many like him! Do not you be one of them. Whatever you are ashamed of, never be ashamed of seeking God.

But, I think it just possible that some reader of this volume is afraid to repent. You think you are so bad and unworthy that Christ will not have you. I do beseech you once more, to cast away such fear forever. Never, never be afraid to repent. The Lord Jesus Christ is very gracious. He will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax. Fear not to draw near to Him. There is a confessional ready for you. You need none made by man. The throne of grace is the true confessional. There is a Priest ready for you. You need no ordained man, no priest, no bishop, no minister, to stand between you and God. The Lord Jesus is the true High Priest. None is so wise, and none so loving as He. None but He can give you absolution, and send you away with a light heart and in perfect peace. Oh, take the invitation I bring you. Fear nothing. Christ is not an "austere man." He "despises none." (Job 36:5.) Arise this day, and flee to Him. Go to Christ and repent this night without delay.

(3) My last word of application shall be an **EXHORTATION** to all who have known what repentance is by experience. I address it to all who have, by God's grace, felt their sins, sorrowed for their sins, confessed their sins, given up their sins, and found peace in the blood of Jesus Christ. What shall I say to you but this—Keep up your repentance! Keep up your repentance. Let it be a habit of mind you watch over to the last day of your life. Let it be a fire you never allow to burn low or to become dull. Keep up your repentance, if you love life.

I do not want you to make a Christ of repentance, or to turn it into a bondage for your soul. I do not bid you to measure the degree of your justification by your repentance, or to suppose that your sins are not forgiven because your repentance is imperfect. Justification is one thing, and repentance is another. You must not confuse things that differ. It is only faith that justifies. It is only faith that lays hold of Christ. But for all that, keep a jealous watch over your repentance. Keep it up—keep it up, and let not the fire burn low. Whenever you find a slackness coming over your soul—whenever you feel slow, and dull, and heavy, and cold, and careless about little sins—look to your own heart then, and take heed lest you fall. Say to your soul, "Oh, my soul, what are you doing? Have you forgotten David's fall? Have you forgotten Peter's backsliding? Have you forgotten David's subsequent misery? Have you forgotten Peter's tears? Awake, O my soul, awake once more. Heap on fuel, make the fire burn bright. Return again to your God, let your repentance once more be lively. Let your repentance be repented over again." Alas, how few are the hours in a Christian's best days when he does not "make work for repentance!"

Keep up your repentance until the last day of your life. There will always be sins to deplore, and infirmities to confess. Take them daily to the Lord Jesus Christ, and obtain from Him daily supplies of mercy and grace. Make confession daily to the great High Priest, and receive from Him daily absolution. Feed daily on the passover Lamb. But never forget that it was to be eaten with *bitter herbs*. "Sir," said a young man to Philip Henry, "how long should a man go on repenting?" What did old Philip Henry reply? "Sir, I hope to carry my repentance to the very gates of heaven. Every day I find I am a sinner, and every day I need to repent. I mean to carry my repentance, by God's help, up to the very gates of heaven."

May this be our divinity, your divinity, my divinity; your theology, my theology! May repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ be the two great pillars before the temple of our religion, the corner-stones in our system of Christianity! (2 Chron. 3:17.) May the two never be disjoined! May we, while we repent, believe; and while we believe, repent! And may repentance and faith, faith and repentance—be ever uppermost, foremost, the chief and principal articles, in the creed of our souls!

Our Profession

by J. C. Ryle

"Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, who has passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast **our profession**." (Hebrews 4:14)

A careful reader of the Epistle to the Hebrews can hardly fail to observe that the words "let us" are found no less than four times in the fourth chapter. In the first verse you will read, "let us fear,"-in the eleventh verse, "let us labor"-in the fourteenth verse, "let us hold fast"-and in the sixteenth verse, "let us come boldly to the throne of grace." We should take note of this.

Now why did the Apostle Paul write in this way? He did it because the Hebrew Christians, to whom he wrote, were a peculiar people, and occupied a peculiar position. They were not like Gentile converts, who had been brought up to worship idols, and had never received any revelation from God. The Jews were a people who had enjoyed the special favor of God for fifteen hundred years. All through that long period they had possessed the law of Moses, and an immense amount of spiritual light, which had not been given to any other nation on earth. These privileges had made them very sensitive and jealous at the idea of any change. They needed to be approached very gently and delicately, and to be addressed in a peculiar style. All this Paul, himself born a Jew, remembered well. He puts himself on a level with them, and says, "Let us-I speak to myself as well as to you, lest I should offend you."

But this is not all. I might add that the Jewish Christians had very peculiar trials to undergo. I suspect they were far more persecuted and ill-used after their conversion than the Gentile Christians were. No doubt it was a hard thing for a Gentile to turn from idols. But it was a much harder thing for a Jew to profess that he was not content with the ceremonial law of Moses, and that he had found a better priest, and a better sacrifice, even Jesus of Nazareth, and the blood of the cross. This also Paul remembered well, and he cheers and encourages them by placing himself by their side, and saying, "Let us fear"-"let us labor"-"let us hold fast"-" let us come boldly"-"I am as you are, we are all in the same boat."

I shall confine myself in this paper to the text which heads it, and I shall try to answer three questions.

I. What is this profession of which Paul speaks?

II. Why does Paul say, "Let us hold fast"?

III. What is the grand encouragement which Paul gives us to "hold fast"?

Before I go any further, I ask my readers to remember that the things we are about to consider were written by inspiration of the Holy Spirit for the benefit of the whole Church of Christ in every age down to the end of the world. They were meant to be used by all true Christians in England, and by all classes, whether high or low, rich or poor, in London, or Liverpool, or in any part of the earth. The Epistle to the Hebrews is not an old worn-out letter which only suits the Jews of eighteen centuries ago. It is meant for you and I.

We all need to be exhorted to "hold fast our profession."

I. Let us begin by considering what is meant by "our profession."

When Paul uses this expression, there can be little doubt about his meaning. He meant that public "profession" of faith in Christ and obedience to Him, which every person made when he became a member of the Christian Church. In the days of the Apostle, when a man or woman left Judaism or heathenism, and received Christ as a Savior, he declared himself a Christian by certain acts. He did it by being publicly baptized, by joining the company of those who had been baptized already, by publicly promising to give up idolatry and wickedness of all kinds, and by habitually taking part with the followers of Jesus of Nazareth in all their religious assemblies, their ways, and their practices. This is what Paul had in view when he wrote the words, "Let us hold fast our profession."

Profession in those days was a very serious matter, and entailed very serious consequences. It often brought on a man persecution, loss of property, imprisonment, and even death. The consequence was that few people ever made a Christian profession in the early Church unless they were thoroughly in earnest, truly converted, and really believers. No doubt there were some exceptions. People like Ananias and Sapphira, and Simon Magus, and Demas, crept in and joined themselves to the disciples. But these were exceptional cases. As a general rule, it was not worth while for a man to profess Christianity if his heart was not entirely in his profession. It cost much. It brought on a man the risk of a vast amount of trouble, and brought in very little gain. The whole result was, that the proportion of sincere, right-hearted, and converted people in the Church of the Apostle's days was far greater than it ever has been at any other period in the last eighteen centuries. There was a very deep meaning in Paul's words when he said, "Let us hold fast our profession."

In the days in which we live, "profession" is a very different thing. Millions of people profess and call themselves Christians, whom the Apostle would not have called Christians at all. Millions are annually baptized, and added to the rolls and registers of churches, who have little or no real religion. Many of them live and die without ever attending a place of worship, and live very ungodly lives. Many more only go to a church or chapel occasionally, or once on Sunday at the most. Many others pass through life without ever becoming communicants, and live and die in the habitual neglect of that Holy Sacrament which the Lord commanded to be received. Most of these people are reckoned Christians while they live, and are buried with Christian burial when they die. But what would Paul have said of them? I fear there can be no doubt about the answer. He would have said they did not deserve to be reckoned members of any Church at all! He would not have addressed them as "saints and faithful brethren in Christ Jesus." He would not have called upon them to "hold fast their profession." He would have told them they had no profession to hold fast, and that they were "yet dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1). All this is sorrowful and painful, but it is only too true. Let those deny it who dare.

Let us, however, thank God that there are not a few to be found in every part of Christendom who really are what they profess to be-true, sincere, earnest-minded, hearty, converted, believing Christians. Some of them, no doubt, belong to churches in which their souls get little help. Some of them have very imperfect knowledge, and hold the truth in its vitals, with a mixture of many defective views. But they have all certain common marks about them. They see the value of their souls, and really want to be saved. They feel the sinfulness of sin, and hate it, and fight with it, and long to be free from it. They see that Jesus Christ alone can save them, and that they ought to trust only in Him. They see that they ought to live holy and godly lives, and in their poor way they try to do it. They love their Bibles, and they pray, though both their reading and their praying are very defective. Some of them, in short, are in the highest standard of Christ's school, and are strong in knowledge, faith, and love. Others are only in the infants' room, and in everything are weak and poor. But in one point they are all one. Their hearts are right in the sight of God; they love Christ; their faces are set towards heaven, and they want to go there. These are those in the present day to whom I wish in this paper to apply Paul's exhortation, "Let us

hold fast our profession." Let us cling to it, and not let it go.

Now I cannot forget that we meet thousands of people in daily life who are always saying, "I make no profession of religion." They not only say it, but rather glory in saying it, as if it was a right, wise, and proper thing to say. They seem even to despise those who make a profession, and to regard them as hypocrites and impostors, or, at any rate, as weak and foolish people. If this paper happens to fall into the hands of any person of this kind, I have somewhat to say to him, and I invite his best attention.

I do not deny that there are many hypocrites in religion. There always were, and there always will be, as long as the world stands. As long as there is good gold and silver coin in the realm, so long there will be forging, coining, and counterfeit money. The very existence of bad coins is an indirect proof that there is something which it is worth while to imitate, and that there is such a thing as good current money in circulation. It is just the same with Christianity! The very fact that there are many false professors in the churches is an indirect proof that there are such people as true-hearted and sound believers. It is one of Satan's favorite devices, in order to bring discredit on Christianity, to persuade some unhappy people to profess what they do not really believe. He tries to damage the cause of our Lord Jesus Christ in the world by sending out wolves in sheep's clothing, and by raising up men and women who talk the language of Canaan, and wear the coat of God's children, while they are inwardly rotten at heart. But these things do not justify a man in condemning all religious profession.

I tell those who boast that they make no profession, that they are only exhibiting their own sorrowful ignorance of Holy Scripture. The hypocrisy of some unhappy people must never prevent us doing our own duty, without caring what men may say or think of us. We must never be ashamed of showing ourselves boldly on Christ's side, by honoring His word, His day, and His ordinances, by speaking up for Christ's cause on all proper occasions, and **by firmly refusing to conform to the sins and the follies of the children of this world**. The words of our Lord Jesus Christ ought never to be forgotten: "Whoever shall be ashamed of Me and of My words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed when He shall come in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels" (Luke 9:26). If we will not confess Christ upon earth, and openly profess that we are His servants, we must not expect that Christ will confess us in heaven at the last day.

In short, the very last thing that a man should be ashamed of is the "profession" of religion. There are many things unhappily of which most people seem not ashamed at all. Ill-temper, selfishness, lack of charity, laziness, malice, backbiting, lying, slandering, intemperance, impurity, gambling, Sabbath-breaking,-all these are terribly common things among men, and of most of them are people who do not seem a bit ashamed-though they ought to be! Those who habitually "do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God" (Gal. 5:21). But of Bible-reading, praying, holy living, and working for the good of bodies and souls, no one ever need be ashamed. These may be things which many laugh at, dislike, and despise, and have no taste for, but they are the very things with which God is well pleased. Once more, I repeat, whatever men may say, the very last thing of which we ought to be ashamed is our "profession" of faith in Christ, and obedience to Christ.

II. Let us, in the second place, consider, Why Paul says, "Let us hold fast our profession." The answer to this question is threefold, and demands the serious attention of all who hope that they are really sincere in their Christian profession.

(a) For one thing, OUR HEARTS are always weak and foolish, even after conversion. We may have passed from death to life, and be renewed in the spirit of our minds. We may see the value of our souls, as we once did not. We may have become new creatures; old things may have passed away, and all things may have become new. But believers must never forget that until they die they carry about with them **a weak, foolish, and treacherous heart**. The roots of all manner of evil are still within us, although cut down to the ground by the grace of the Holy Spirit. Whether we like to acknowledge it or not, there are within us, at our very best, latent dislike of trouble, secret desire to please man and keep in with the world, carelessness about our private Bible-reading and our prayers, envy and jealousy of others, laziness about doing good, selfishness and desire to have our own way, forgetfulness of the wishes of others, and lack of watchfulness over our own besetting sins. All these things are often lying hidden within us, and below the surface of our hearts. The holiest saint may find to his cost some day that they are all there alive, and ready to show themselves. No wonder that our Lord Jesus said to the three Apostles in the garden, "Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit truly is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Mar. 14:38). I have no doubt that Paul had the heart in view, when he wrote those words, "Hold fast." "Let us therefore hold fast our profession."

(b) For another thing, the world is a source of immense danger to the Christian. From the day that we are converted, we are living in a most unhealthy atmosphere for religion. We live and move and have our being, in the midst of a vast multitude of people who are utterly without vital Christianity. In every rank of life we meet with hundreds who, however moral and respectable, seem to care for nothing but such things as these,-What shall I eat? What shall I drink? What can I get? What can I spend? How shall I employ my time? What profit can I make? What amusement can I have? What pleasant company can I enjoy! As for God, and Christ, and the Holy Spirit, and the Bible, and prayer, and repentance, and faith, and holy living, and doing good in the world, and death, and resurrection, and judgment, and heaven and hell--they are subjects which never appear to come across them except in sickness, or at a funeral.

Now to live constantly in the midst of such people, as a Christian must do, is sure to be a great trial to him, and requires constant watchfulness to prevent his getting harm. We are incessantly tempted to give way about **little things**, and to make compromises and concessions. We naturally dislike giving offence to others, and having frictions and collisions with relatives, friends, and neighbors. We do not like to be laughed at and ridiculed by the majority, and to feel that we are always in a minority in every company into which we go. I fear that too many are 'laughed out of heaven' and 'laughed into hell'. It is a true saying of Solomon, "The fear of man brings a snare" (Pro. 29:25).

I once knew a brave sergeant of a cavalry regiment, who, after living to the age of fifty without any religion, became for the last few years of his life a decided Christian. He told me that when he first began to think about his soul, and to pray, some months passed away before he dare tell his wife that he said his prayers; and that he used to creep upstairs without his boots at evening, that his wife might not hear him, and find out what he was doing!

The plain truth is, that "the whole world lies in wickedness" (1Jo. 5:19), and it is vain to ignore the danger that the world causes to the believer's soul. The spirit of the world, and the tone of the world, and the tastes of the world, and the air of the world, and the breath of

the world, are continually about him every day that he lives, drawing him down and pulling him back. If he does not keep his faith in lively exercise, he is sure to catch infection, and take damage, like the travelers through the Campagna at Rome, who take a fever without being aware of it at the time. The most mischievous and unsanitary gas is that which our bodily senses do not detect. We have reason to pray continually for an increase of that faith of which John says, "that it gives us the victory over the world" (1 John 5:4). Happy, indeed, is that Christian who can be in the world and yet not of the world, who can do his duty in it, and yet not be conformed to it, who can pass through it unmoved by its smiles or its frowns, its flattery or its enmity, its open opposition or its playful ridicule, its sweets or its bitters, its gold or its sword! When I think what the world is, and see what harm it has done and is doing to souls, I do not wonder that Paul says, "Hold fast." "Let us hold fast our profession."

(e) For one thing more, the devil is a constant enemy to the Christian's soul. That great, sleepless, and unwearied foe is always laboring to do us harm. It is his constant object to wound, hurt, vex, injure, or weaken--if he cannot kill and destroy. He is an unseen enemy who is always near us, "about our path, and about our bed," and spying out all our ways, prepared to suit his temptations to the special weak points of every man. He knows us far better than we know ourselves. He has been studying one book for 6000 years-- the book of fallen human nature, and he is a spirit of almost boundless subtlety and cunning, and of boundless malice. The best of saints has little idea how many vile suggestions in his heart come from the devil, and what a restless adversary stands at his right hand.

This is he who tempted Eve at the beginning, and persuaded her that she might disobey God, eat the forbidden fruit and not die. This is he who tempted David to number the people, and to cause the death of 70,000 of his subjects by pestilence in three days. This is he who tried to tempt our Lord in the wilderness immediately after His baptism, and even quoted Scripture to gain his end. This is he who opposed our Lord all throughout His three years' ministry, sometimes by possessing the bodies of unhappy men and women in a most mysterious manner, and at last by putting it into the heart of one of His Apostles to betray Him. This is he who constantly opposed the Apostles after our Lord's ascension, and tried to stop the progress of the gospel.-This is he of whom Paul testifies that even "Satan is transformed into an angel of light," and that false teachers are his agents (2Co. 11:14).

Does any reader of this paper foolishly suppose that the devil is asleep, or dead, or less mischievous now than in old time? Nothing of the kind! He is still "walking about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." He is still "going to and fro in the earth, and walking up and down in it" (1Peter 5:8; Job 1:7). It is he who goes among heathen nations and persuades them to shed oceans of blood in the worship of idols, or murderous wars. It is he who goes to and fro among fallen Churches, persuading them to throw aside the Bible, and satisfy people with 'formal worship' or groveling superstitions. It is he who walks up and down in Protestant countries, and stirs up party spirit, and bitter political strife, setting class against class, and subjects against rulers, in order to distract men's minds from better things. It is he who is continually going to the ears of intellectual and highly educated men, persuading them that the old Bible is not true, and advising them to be content with Atheism, Theism, Agnosticism, Secularism, and a general contempt for the world to come. It is he, above all, who persuades foolish people that there is no such person as a devil, and no future judgment after death, and no hell. In all this fearful list of things I firmly believe that the devil lies at the bottom, and is the true root, reason, and cause. Can we suppose for a moment that he will let true Christians go quietly to heaven, and not tempt them along the way?

Away with the silly thought! We have need to pray against the devil, as well as against the world and the flesh. In the great trinity of enemies which the believer should daily remember, the devil perhaps is the greatest because he is the least seen. Nothing delights him so much (if, indeed, he can be delighted at all) as to injure a true Christian, and make him bring discredit on his religion. When I think of the devil, I do not wonder that Paul said, "Hold fast." "Let us hold fast our profession."

Now I suspect that some reader of this paper may be secretly thinking that I am an alarmist, and that there is no need of such watchfulness, carefulness, and "holding fast." I ask such a person to turn with me to the Bible for a few moments, and to consider seriously what that blessed book teaches.

I ask him to remember that Judas Iscariot and Demas both began well, and made a good profession. One was a chosen Apostle of our Lord Jesus Christ, a constant companion of our blessed Savior for three years. He walked with Him, talked with Him, heard His teaching, saw His miracles, and up to the very night before our Lord was crucified was never thought a worse man than Peter, James, or John. Yet this unhappy man at last let go his profession, betrayed his Master, came to a miserable end, and went to his own place. The other man whom I named, Demas, was a chosen companion of the Apostle Paul, and professed to be of like mind with that eminent man of God. There can be little doubt that for some years he journeyed with him, helped him, and took part in his evangelistic labors. But how did it all end? He gave up his profession, and the last Epistle Paul wrote contains this melancholy record: "Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world" (2Ti. 4:10). We never hear of him again.

To every one who thinks I have dwelt too much on the Christian's dangers, I say this day, Remember Demas, remember Judas Iscariot, tighten your grasp, "hold fast your profession," and beware. We may appear to men to be very good Christians for a season, and yet prove at last to be stony-ground hearers, and destitute of a wedding garment.

But this is not all. I ask every believer to remember that if he does not "hold fast," he may pierce himself through with many sorrows, and bring great discredit on his character. We should never forget David's awful fall in the matter of the wife of Uriah, and Peter's thrice-repeated denial of his Master, and Cranmer's temporary cowardice, of which he so bitterly repented at last. Are we greater and stronger than they? "Let us not be high-minded, but fear." There is a godly fear which is of great use to the soul. It was the great Apostle of the Gentiles who wrote these words: "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest, after I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" (1Co. 9:27).

Does any Christian reader of these pages desire much happiness in his religion, and much joy and peace in believing? Let him take an old minister's advice this day, and ': hold fast his profession." Let him **resolve to be very thorough, very decided, very watchful, very careful about the state of his soul.** The more boldly he shows his colors, and the more uncompromising and firm he is, the lighter will he find his heart, and the more sensibly will he feel the sun shining on his face. None are so happy in God's service as decided Christians. When John Rogers, the first martyr in Queen Mary's time, was being led to Smithfield to be burned, the French Ambassador reported that he looked as bright and cheerful as if he were going to his wedding.

Does any Christian reader of these pages desire much usefulness to others in his religion? Let me assure him that none do so much

good in the long run of life, and leave such a mark on their generation, as those who "hold fast their profession" most tightly, and are most decided servants of Christ. Few men, perhaps, did more for the cause of the Protestant Reformation, and shook the power of Rome more completely in this country, than the two noble bishops who were burned back to back at one stake in Oxford, and would not let go their faith to save their lives. I need not say that I refer to Ridley and Latimer. The careless, thoughtless, irreligious world takes notice of such men, and is obliged to allow that there is something real and solid in their religion. The more light shines in our lives, the more good shall we do in the world. It is not for nothing that our Lord says, in the Sermon on the Mount, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Mat. 5:16).

Let us gather up all these things in our memories, and never forget them. Let it be a settled principle in our minds, that it is of immeasurable importance to our happiness and usefulness to "hold fast our profession," and to be always on our guard. Let us dismiss from our minds the crude modern idea that a believer has only got to sit still, and "yield himself" to God. Let us rather maintain the language of Scripture, and strive to "mortify the deeds of our body," to "crucify our flesh," to "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit," to wrestle, to fight, and live the soldier's life (Rom. 8:13; Gal. 5:24; 2Co. 7:1; Eph. 6:12; 1Ti. 6:12; 2Ti. 2:3). One might think that the account of the armor of God in the Epistle to the Ephesians ought to settle the question of our duty. But the plain truth is, men will persist in confounding two things that differ, that is justification and sanctification. In justification, the word to be addressed to man is, Believe, only believe. In sanctification, the word must be, Watch, pray, and fight. What God has divided, let us not mingle and confuse. I can find no words to express my own deep sense of the immense importance of "holding fast our profession."

III. In the last place, let us consider what ENCOURAGEMENT there is to Christians to hold fast their profession.

The Apostle Paul was singularly fitted, both by grace and nature, to handle this subject. Of all the inspired writers in the New Testament, none seems to have been so thoroughly taught of God to deal with the conflicts of the human heart as Paul. None was better acquainted with the dangers, diseases, and remedies of the soul. The proof of this is to be seen in the seventh chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, and the fifth chapter of his Second Epistle to the Corinthians. Those two chapters ought to be frequently studied by every Christian who wishes to understand his own heart.

Now what is the ground of encouragement which Paul proposes? He tells us to "hold fast our profession," and not let it go, because "we have a great High Priest who is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God."

That word "High Priest" would ring with power in the ears of a Jewish reader far more than it would in the ears of Gentile Christians. It would stir up in his mind the remembrance of many typical things in the service of the tabernacle and temple. It would make him recollect that the Jewish high priest was a kind of mediator between God and the people-that he alone went once every year into the Holy of Holies on the day of atonement, and had access through the veil to the mercy-seat-that he was a kind of arbitrator between the twelve tribes and God, to lay his hand on both (Job. 9:33)-that he was the chief minister over the house of God, who was intended "to have compassion on the ignorant and them that were out of the way" (Heb. 5:2). All these things would give the Jews some idea of what Paul meant when he said, "Let us hold fast," because we have got a great High Priest in heaven.

The plain truth is, that the Christian is meant to understand that **we have a mighty, living Friend in heaven**, who not only died for us, but rose again, and after rising again took His seat at the right hand of God, to be our Advocate and Intercessor with the Father until He comes again. We are meant to understand that Christ not only died for us, but is alive for us, and actively working on our behalf at this very day. In short, the encouragement that Paul holds out to believers is, the living priesthood of Jesus Christ.

Is not this exactly what he meant when he told the Hebrews that Christ is "able to save them to the uttermost who come unto God by Him, because He ever lives to make intercession for them" (Heb. 7:25) Is not this what he meant when he told the Romans, "If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life" (Rom. 5:10) Is not this what he meant when he wrote that glorious challenge, "Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, yes, rather, who has risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us" (Rom. 8:34) Here, in one word, is the believer's fountain of consolation. He is not only to look to a Savior who died as his Substitute, and shed His blood for him, but to a Savior who also after His resurrection took His seat at God's right hand, and lives there as his constant Intercessor and Priest.

Let us think for a moment **what a wonderful and suitable High Priest** is the High Priest of our profession, a million times superior to any high priest of the family of Aaron.

Jesus is a High Priest of **almighty power**, for He is very God of very God, never slumbering, never sleeping, never dying, and eternal. The Jewish high priests were "not allowed to continue by reason of death" (Heb. 7:23), but Christ being raised from the dead dies no more. Our great High Priest never grows old, and never dies (Rom. 6:9).

Jesus is a High Priest who is **perfect Man as well as perfect God**. He knows what our bodies are, for He had a body Himself, and is acquainted with all its sinless weakness and pains. He knows what hunger, and thirst, and suffering are, for He lived for thirty-three years upon earth, and knows the physical nature of an infant, a child, a boy, a young man, and a man of full age. "He has suffered Himself, being tempted" (Heb. 2:18).

Jesus is a High Priest of **matchless sympathy**. He can be "touched with the feeling of our infirmities" (Heb. 4:15). His heart was always overflowing with love, pity, and compassion while He was on earth. He wept at the grave of Lazarus. He wept over unbelieving Jerusalem. He had an ear ready to hear every cry for help, and was ever going about doing good to the sick and the afflicted. One of His last thoughts on the cross was one of care for His mother, and one of His first messages after His resurrection was one of "peace" to His poor fallen Apostles. And He is not changed. He has carried that wonderful heart up to heaven, and is ever watching the weakest lamb in His flock with merciful tenderness.

Jesus is a High Priest of **perfect wisdom**. He knows exactly what each of us is, and what each of us requires. "He will not allow us to be tempted above that which we are able to bear" (1Co. 10:13), nor allow us to remain in the furnace of suffering one moment beyond the time that is required for our refining. He will give us strength according to our day, and grace according to our need. He knows the most secret feelings of our hearts, and understands the meaning of our feeblest prayers. He is not like Aaron, and Eli, and Abiathar, and Annas, and Caiaphas, an erring and imperfect high priest in dealing with those who come to Him, and spread out their petitions

before Him. He never makes any mistakes.

I challenge every reader of this paper to tell me, if he can, what greater consolation and encouragement the soul of man can have than the possession of such a High Priest as this? We do not think enough of Him in these days. We talk of His death, and His sacrifice, and His blood, and His atonement, and His finished work on the cross; and no doubt we can never make too much of these glorious subjects. But we err greatly if we stop short here. We ought to look beyond the cross and the grave, to the life, the priesthood, and the constant **intercession** of Christ our Lord. Unless we do this, we have only a defective view of Christian doctrine. The consequences of neglecting this part of our Lord's offices are very serious, and have done great harm to the Church and the world.

Young men and women in all our churches, and generally speaking, all new believers, are taking immense damage for lack of right teaching about the priestly office of Christ. They feel within themselves a daily craving after help, and grace, and strength, and guidance in running the race set before them along the narrow way of life. It does not satisfy them to hear that they ought to be always looking back to the cross and the atonement. There is something within them which whispers that they would like to have a living friend. Then comes the devil, and suggests that they ought to go to earthly priests, and make confession, and receive absolution, and keep up the habit of doing this continually. They are often far too ready to believe it, and foolishly try to supply the hunger of their souls by extravagantly frequent reception of the Lord's Supper, and submitting to the spiritual directorship of some clergyman. All this is little better than religious opium-eating and dram-drinking. It soothes the heart for a little season, but does no real good, and often results in bringing souls into a state of morbid superstitious bondage. It is not the medicine which Scripture has provided.

The truth which all believers, and especially young men and women in these days, have need to be told is the truth of Christ's life in heaven, and priestly intercession fox us. We need no earthly confessor, and no earthly priest. There is only one Priest to whom we ought to go with our daily needs, even Jesus the Son of God. It is impossible to find one more mighty, more loving, more wise, more ready to help than He is. It is a wise saying of an old divine, that "the eyes of a believer ought to be fixed on Christ in all his dealings with God. The one eye is to be set on His oblation, and the other on His intercession." Let us never forget this. The true secret of holding fast our profession is to be continually exercising faith in the priestly office of Christ, and making use of it every day.

He who acts on this principle will find it possible to serve God and be a Christian in any position, however hard it may be. He need not suppose for a moment, that he cannot have true religion without retiring from the world, and going into a monastery, or living like a hermit in a cave. A young woman must not suppose that she cannot serve God in her own family, because of unconverted parents, brothers, and sisters, and that she must go into some "Religious House;' so called, in company with a few like-minded women. All such ideas are senseless and unscriptural; they come from beneath, and not from above. At school or in college, in the army or the navy, in the bank or at the bar, in the merchant's house or on exchange, it is possible for a man to serve God. As a daughter at home, or a teacher in a high school, or an assistant in a house of business, a woman can serve God, and must never give way to the cowardly thought that it is impossible. But how is it all to be done? Simply by living the life of faith in the Son of God, by continually looking back to Him on the cross, and to the fountain of His blood for daily pardon and peace of conscience, and by daily looking up to Him at the right hand of God interceding for us, and daily drawing from Him supplies of grace in this world of need. This is the sum of the whole matter. We have a great High Priest who is passed into the heavens, and through Him it is possible not only to begin, but to "hold fast" our profession.

I will now conclude this paper by addressing a few words of **direct practical exhortation** to every reader into whose hands it may happen to fall.

(a) Do you belong to that huge class of so-called Christians who make no profession of religion at all? Alas! it is a pity this class should be so large; but it is vain to shut our eyes to the fact that it is very large. These of whom I speak are not atheists or infidels; they would not for a moment like to be told they are not Christians. They go to places of worship, they think Christianity a very proper thing for baptisms, weddings, and funerals. They say grace before and after dinner; they like their children to have some religion in their education. But they never seem to get any further; they shrink from making a "profession." It is useless to tell them to "hold fast," because they have nothing to hold.

I ask such people, in all affection and kindness, to consider how unreasonable and inconsistent their position is. Most of them believe the Apostles' Creed. They believe there is a God, and a world to come after death, and a resurrection, and a judgment, and a life everlasting. But what can be more senseless than to believe all these vast realities, and yet to travel on towards the grave without any preparation for the great future? You will not deny that you will have to meet the Lord Jesus Christ, the Judge of all, when the last trumpet sounds, and you will stand before the great white throne. But where will you be in that awful day, if you have never professed faith, love, and obedience to that Judge during the time of your life upon earth? How can you possibly expect Him to confess and own you in that hour, if you have been afraid or ashamed to confess Him, and to declare yourself boldly upon His side, while you are upon earth?

Think of these things, I beseech you, and change your plan of life. Cast aside vain excuses and petty reasons for delay. Resolve by the grace of God to lay firm hold on Jesus Christ, and to enlist like a man under His banners. That blessed Savior will receive you just as you are, however unworthy you may feel yourself. Wait for nothing, and wait for nobody. Begin to pray this very day, and to pray real, lively, fervent prayers, such as the penitent thief prayed upon the cross. Take down your long-neglected Bible, and begin to read it. Break off every known bad habit. Seek the company and friendship of thoroughgoing Christians. Give up going to places where your soul can get nothing but harm. In one word, begin to make "a profession," fearing neither the laughter nor the scorn of man. The word of the Lord Jesus is for you as well as another: "He who comes to Me I will never cast out" (John 6:37). I have seen many people on their death-beds, but I never met with one who said he was sorry he had made a "profession" of religion.

(b) In the last place, do you belong to that much smaller class of people who really profess Christian faith, and Christian obedience, and are trying, however weakly, to follow Christ in the midst of an evil world. I think I know something of what goes on in your hearts. You sometimes feel that you will never persevere to the end, and will be obliged some day to give up your profession. You are sometimes tempted to write bitter things against yourself, and to fancy you have got no grace at all. I am afraid there are myriads of true Christians in this condition, who go trembling and doubting toward heaven, with Despondency, and Much-Afraid, and Fearing in the Pilgrim's Progress, and fear they will never get to the Celestial City at all. But oddly enough, in spite of all their groans and doubts and fears, they do not turn back to the city from which they came (Heb. 11:15). They press on, though faint, yet pursuing, and, as

John Wesley used to say of his people, "they end well."

Now, my advice to all such people, if any of them are reading this paper, is very simple. Say every morning and evening of your life, "Lord, increase my faith." Cultivate the habit of fixing your eye more simply on Jesus Christ, and try to know more of the fullness there is laid up in Him for every one of His believing people. Do not be always poring down over the imperfections of your own heart, and dissecting your own besetting sins. Look up. Look more to your risen Head in heaven, and try to realize more than you do that the Lord Jesus not only died for you, but that He also rose again, and that He is ever living at God's right hand as your Priest, your Advocate, and your Almighty Friend. When the Apostle Peter "walked upon the waters to go to Jesus," he got on very well as long as his eye was fixed upon his Almighty Master and Savior. But when he looked away to the winds and waves, and reasoned, and considered his own strength, and the weight of his body, he soon began to sink, and cried, "Lord, save me." No wonder that our gracious Lord, while grasping his hand and delivering him from a watery grave, said, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" Alas! many of us are very like Peter--we look away from Jesus, and then our hearts faint, and we feel sinking (Mat. 14:28-31).

Think, last of all, how many million of men and women like yourself have got safely home during the last eighteen hundred years. Like you, they have had their battles and their conflicts, their doubts and their fears. Some of them have had very little "joy and peace in believing," and were almost surprised when they woke up in Paradise. Some of them enjoyed full assurance, and strong consolation, and have entered the haven of eternal life, like a gallant ship in full sail And who are these last that have done so? Those who have not only held their profession between finger and thumb, but have grasped it firmly with both hands, and have been ready to die for Christ, rather than not confess Him before men. Take courage, believer. The bolder and more decided you are, the more comfort you will have in Christ.

You cannot have two heavens, one here, and the other hereafter. You are yet in the world, and you have a sinful body, and there is always near you a busy devil. But great faith shall always have great peace. The happiest person in religion will always be that man or woman who can say, with a true heart, like Paul, "The life that I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." **In myself I see nothing good, but I keep ever looking to Jesus**, and by His grace I hold fast my profession (Gal. 2:20).

And now I cannot leave this great and solemn subject without offering to all who read it a parting word of **warning** about the times in which we live. I will try to explain briefly what I mean.

I believe, then, that for three centuries there has not been an age in which it has been so needful to urge professing Christians to "hold fast" as it is at this time. No doubt there is plenty of religion of a certain sort in these days. There are many more attendants on public worship all over the land than there were thirty years ago. But it may well be doubted whether there is any increase of vital Christianity. I am greatly mistaken if there is not a growing tendency to "hold fast" nothing in religion, and a disposition to hold everything as loosely as possible. "Nothing fast! Everything loose!" seems the order of the day.

How is it in matters of faith and doctrine? It used to be thought important to hold clear and distinct views about such points as the inspiration of the Scriptures, the atonement, the work of the Spirit, the personality of the devil, the reality of future punishment. It is not thought so now. The old order of things has passed away. You may believe anything or nothing on these subjects, so long as you are earnest and sincere. Holding fast has given way to holding loose.

How is it in matters of worship and ritual? It used to be thought important to be content with the plain teaching of the Prayer Book. It is not thought so now. You must have the Lord's Table called an altar, and the sacrament called a sacrifice, without the slightest warrant in the Prayer Book, and a ceremonial fitted to these novel views. And then if you complain, you are told that you are very narrow and illiberal, and that a clergyman ought to be allowed to do and say and teach anything, if he is only earnest and sincere. Holding fast has given way to holding loose.

How is it in the matter of holy living? It used to be thought important to "renounce the pomps and vanity of this wicked world," and to keep clear of races, theater-going, balls, card-playing, and the like. It is not thought so now. You may do anything and go anywhere you please, so long as you keep Lent, and occasionally attend early Communion! You must not be so very strict and particular! Once more I say, holding fast has given way to holding loose.

This state of things, to say the least, is not satisfactory. It is full of peril. It shows a condition of Christianity which, I am certain, would not have satisfied Paul or John. The world was not turned upside down by such vague, loose doctrine and practice eighteen centuries ago. The souls of men in the present day will never receive much benefit from such loose Christianity either in England or anywhere else. Decision in teaching and living is the only Christianity which God has blessed in the ages that are past, or will continue to bless in our own time. Loose, vague, misty, broad Christianity may avoid offence and please people in health and prosperity, but it will not convert souls, or supply solid comfort in the hour of sorrow or sickness, or on the bed of death.

The plain truth is, that "sincerity and earnestness" are becoming the idol of many English Christians in these latter days. People seem to think it matters little what opinions a man holds in religion, so long as he is "earnest and sincere;" and you are thought uncharitable if you doubt his soundness in the faith! Against this idolatry of mere "earnestness" I enter my solemn protest. I charge every reader of this paper to remember that God's written Word is the only rule of faith, and to believe nothing to be true and soul-saving in religion which cannot be proved by plain texts of Scripture. I entreat him to read the Bible, and make it his only test of truth and error, right and wrong. And for the last time I say, "Hold fast, and not loose-hold fast your profession."

Are You Ready?

by J. C. Ryle

"Be also ready." Matthew 24:44

Reader, I ask you a plain question at the beginning of a New Year. Are you ready? It is a solemn thing to part company with the old year. It is a still more solemn thing to begin a new one. It is like entering a dark passage. We know not what the may meet before the end. All before us is uncertain. We know not what a day may bring forth, much less what may happen in a year. Reader, are you ready? Are you ready for **sickness**? You cannot expect to be always well. You have a body fearfully and wonderfully made. It is awful to think how many diseases may assail it. "Strange that a harp of thousand strings should keep in tune so long!" Pain and weakness are a hard trial. They can bow down the strong man, and make him like a child. They can weary the temper and exhaust the patience, and make men cry in the morning, "Would God it were evening, and in the evening, would God it were morning." All this may come to pass this very year. Your reason may be shattered. Your senses may be weakened. Your nerves may be unstrung. The very grasshopper may become a burden. Reader, if sickness comes upon you, are you ready? "Man," says the Scripture, "is born to sorrow." This witness is true. Your **property** may be taken from you. Your riches may make themselves wings and flee away. Your **friends** may fail you. Your children may disappoint you. Your servants may deceive you. Your character may be assailed. Your conduct may be misrepresented. **Troubles, annoyances, vexations, anxieties**, may surround you on every side like a host of armed men. Wave upon wave may burst over your head. You may feel worn, and worried, and crushed to the dust. Reader, if affliction comes upon you, are you ready?

Are you ready for **bereavements**? No doubt there are those in the world whom you love. There are those whose names are engraved on your heart, and round whom your affections are entwined. There are those who are the light of your eyes, and the very sunshine of your existence. But they are all mortal. Any one of them may die this year. Before the daisies blossom again, any one of them may be lying in the tomb. Your Rachel may be buried. Your Joseph may betaken from you. Your dearest idol may be broken. Bitter tears and deep mourning may be your portion. Before December you may feel terribly alone. Reader, if bereavement comes upon you, are you ready?

Are you ready for death? It *must* come some day. It *may* come this year. You cannot live always. This very year may be your last. You have no freehold in this world. You have not so much as a lease. You are nothing better than a tenant at God's will. Your last sickness may come upon you and give you notice to exit. The doctor may visit you and exhaust his skill over your case. Your friends map sit by your bed-side, and look graver and graver every day. You may feel you own strength gradually wasting, and find something saying within, "I shall not come down from this bed, but I shall die." You may see the world slipping from beneath your feet, and all your schemes and plans suddenly stopped short. You may feel yourself drawing near to the coffin, and the grave, and the worm, and an unseen world, and eternity, and God. Reader, if death should come upon you, are you ready?

Are you ready for **the second coming of Christ**? He will come again to this world one day. As surely as He came the first time, 1800 years ago, so surely will He come the second time. He will come to reward all His saints who have believed in Him and confessed Him on earth. He will come; to judge all His enemies, the careless, the ungodly, the impenitent, and the unbelieving. He will come very suddenly, at an hour when no man thinks, as a thief in the night. He will come in terrible majesty, in the glory of His, Father, with the holy angels. A flaming fire shall burn before Him. The dead shall be raised. The judgment shall be set. The books shall be opened. Some shall be exalted into heaven. Many, very many, shall be cast down to hell. The time for repentance shall be past. Many shall cry, "Lord, Lord, open to us," but find the door of mercy shut forever. *After this there will be no change.* Reader, if Christ should come the second time this year, are you ready? Oh! reader, these are solemn questions. They ought to make you examine yourself. They ought to make you think. It would be a terrible thing to be taken by surprise. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

But shall I leave you here? I will not do so. Shall I raise searchings of heart, and not set before you the way of life? I will not do so. Hear me for a few moments, while I try to show you THE MAN THAT IS READY. He that is ready has a ready Savior. He has Jesus ever ready to help him. He lives the life of faith in the Son of God. He has found out his own sinfulness, and fled to Christ for peace. He has committed his soul, and all its concerns, to Christ's keeping. If he has bitter cups of affliction to drink, he knows they are mixed by the hand that was nailed to the cross for his sins. If he is called to die, he knows that the grave is the place where the Lord lay. If those whom he loves are taken away, he remembers that Jesus is a friend that sticks closer than a brother, and a husband who never dies. If the Lord should come again, he knows that he has nothing to fear. The Judge of all will be that very Jesus who has washed his sins away. Happy is that man who can say with Hezekiah, "The Lord is ready to save me!" (Isaiah xxxviii. 20.)

He that is ready has a ready heart. He has been born again, and renewed in the spirit of his mind. The Holy Spirit has shown him the true value of all here below, and taught him to set his affections on things above. The Holy Spirit has shown him his own deserts, and made him feel that he ought to be thankful for everything, and satisfied with any condition. If affliction comes upon him, his heart whispers, "there must be a needs-be. I deserve correction. It is meant to teach me some useful lesson." If bereavement comes upon him, his heart reminds him that the Lord gave and the Lord must take away, whenever he sees fit. If death draws near, his heart says, "My times are in your hand; do as you will, when you will, and where you will." If the Lord should come, his heart would cry, "This is the day I have long prayed for- the kingdom of God is come at last." Blessed is he who has a ready heart!

He who is ready, has a home ready for him in heaven. The Lord Jesus Christ has told him that He is gone "to prepare a place" for him. A house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, awaits him. He is not yet come to his full inheritance. His best things are yet to come. He can bear sickness, for yet a little time he shall have a glorious body. He can bear losses and crosses, for his choicest treasures are far beyond the reach of harm. He can bear disappointments, for the springs of his greatest happiness can never be made dry. He can think calmly of death. It will open a door for him from the lower house to the upper chamber, even the presence of the King. He is immortal until his work is done. He can look forward to the coming of the Lord without alarm. He knows that they who are ready will enter in with Him to the marriage supper of the Lamb. Happy is that man whose lodging is prepared for him in the kingdom of Christ! Reader, do you know anything of the things I have just spoken of? Do you know anything of a ready Savior, a ready heart, and a ready home in heaven? Examine yourself honestly. How does the matter stand? Oh! be merciful to your own soul. Have compassion on that immortal part of you. Do not neglect its interests for the sake of mere worldly objects. Business, pleasure, money, politics, will soon be done with forever. Do not refuse to consider the question I ask you. ARE YOU READY? ARE YOU READY?

Reader, if you are not ready, I beseech you to make ready without delay. I tell you, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that all things are ready on God's part for your salvation. The Father is ready to receive you. The Lord Jesus is ready to wash your sins away. The Spirit is ready to renew and sanctify you. Angels are ready to rejoice over you. Saints are ready to hold out the right hand to you. Oh! why not make ready this very year? Reader, if you have reason to hope you are ready, I advise you to make sure. Walk more

closely with God. Get nearer to Christ. Seek to exchange hope for assurance. Seek to feel the witness of the Spirit more clearly and distinctly every year. Lay aside every weight, and the sin that so easily besets you. Press towards the mark more earnestly. Fight a better fight, and war a better warfare every year you live. Pray more. Read more. Mortify self more. Love the brethren more. Oh! that you may endeavor so to grow in grace every year, that your last things may be far more than your first, and the end of your Christian course be better than the beginning.

An Example in Word

by J. C. Ryle

"Be an example of the believers in word." 1 Timothy 4:12.

Brethren, the subject on which I am requested to address you today, is entitled- "The minister, an example to believers in word." I open it under a deep sense of my own inability to do it justice, and with deep regret that it has not fallen into better hands. The text on which the subject is founded, contains an expression which requires, an explanatory remark. I consider the expression, "word," in this sentence, to mean, not "the word of God," but "talking," "speech," or to use a common phrase, "conversation." I believe that the expression, "Logos," is never applied to the Scriptures, or to, the gospel-message, in the New Testament without the accompaniment of the article. "Word " must, therefore, be taken here in the same sense as in Coloss. iii. 17, "Whatever you do in word or deed." It means simply speech, in contradistinction to action. I need hardly point out to my brethren the extreme delicacy and difficulty of the subject in this point of view. I can only assure them, that if I speak of faults, it is not because I feel myself free from them, and if I direct their attention to excellencies of speech, it is not because I feel I have attained to them.

I. Something I would first say about THE IMMENSE IMPORTANCE OF THE SUBJECT. I need hardly remind you of the testimony of Scripture on this point. The Apostle James, in the third chapter of his Epistle, says, "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man." He calls the tongue- "a fire, a world of iniquity, an unruly evil full of deadly poison." He says, that "no man can tame" it. The Lord Jesus Christ tells us that "for every idle word men speak they shall give account in the day of judgment"- and that "by our words we shall be justified, and by our words we shall be condemned." (Matt. xii. 36.) By conversation and speech, sin first came into the world. It began by the passage of words between Satan and Eve. By the tongue the Gospel was first proclaimed to the world. It was preached by living men, and heard long before it was read. The wisest of men might well say, "death and life are in the power of the tongue." (Prov. xviii. 21.) These are important considerations for all professing Christians. All ought to take heed to their ways, that they offend not in their tongues. But there are none, surely, to whom carefulness about words is so seriously important as the ministers of the Gospel. Ministers are men watched by the world. The higher their standard of godliness, the more narrowly they will be watched. They are like a city set upon a hill. It behooves them to be doubly watchful over their tongues, and doubly careful not to injure the cause they have to defend, by erring in word. In word, as well as in deed, they must strive to be examples.

II. Something I would say, in the next place, about A MINISTER'S DANGERS IN THE MATTER OF HIS SPEECH OR WORDS. Once for all I beg to say, I am not now referring to the public use of the gift of speech, to preaching, lecturing, or expounding. These are not matters in which the minister is to be an example to the believer. The use of the tongue on which I am now dwelling, is that use which is common both to the minister and the layman- the use of the tongue in private conversation. There are great dangers into which we are all liable to fall, and I crave permission to point out two or three to my brethren, against which all ought to be on their guard, if they desire to be an example to believers.

We are all in danger of being "unspiritual" in our tone of speech and conversation. We are apt to leave the impression on the minds of company, that we have left our religion in our pulpits, and are ashamed to speak of our Master outside the walls of our churches. I do not allude to pastoral visitation, but to the tone of our conversation in social communion with our neighbors, friends, and relatives. I do not mean to say we ought to be always preaching in every room we enter; but I do think we are often in danger of forgetting whose we specially are, and whom we specially serve, and of talking of nothing but temporal things. Surely a minister ought not to spend a whole evening in speaking only of politics, literature, arts, and sciences. These may be innocent, harmless, and useful subjects, but they are not the minister's special subject. The very ardor with which these subjects are taken up in this day, increases the danger of our being absorbed by them. The desire not to seem ignorant, has seduced many a minister into talking too much about them. This is one danger.

We are, many of us, in danger of giving way to levity in conversation. I pray my brethren not to mistake my meaning in saying this. I am very far from asserting that all mirth is sinful, or that it is wicked to laugh. But I do think that high spirits and excessive cheerfulness are sometimes a snare to a minister. They sometimes carry him away, and lead him to say things for which he is afterwards sorry. It is doubtless a good thing "to rejoice always." But it is well to "rejoice with trembling." It is a happy thing for a man to be of a lively, sanguine temperament, and to be able to shake off care for a season, and say with the famous statesman, when he took off his official robe, "Lie there, Lord Chancellor." But I earnestly entreat my brethren to bear with me, when I suggest to their consideration, that excessive jocoseness and love of merriment, are not becoming in an ambassador of Christ, and a watchman for souls. Some, no doubt, are naturally far graver than others. But all would do well to remember the inconvenience of levity, and watch against it.

Another danger to which we are exposed, in the present day especially, is bitterness and uncharitableness of speech. We live in controversial times. Distrust and party spirit abound. Diverse and strange doctrines are constantly springing up, which the minister of the Gospel is obliged, from the nature of his office, to notice, and about which he is frequently questioned in society. May it not be feared, that in the heat of the moment, we sometimes use language, and apply epithets for which in calmer hours we are sorry? Do we never detect in ourselves a disposition to make extreme and unqualified statements in describing an adversary's opinions? Do we never discover in ourselves a readiness to impute motives and intentions to an opponent, of which, perhaps, he is innocent? Are we never guilty of slight misrepresentation and extravagance in describing the views of the other side? Let no brother mistake me. I am entirely in favor of bold, and outspoken, and unmistakable language. But I think in the heat of controversy, we are sometimes tempted to forget to "speak the truth in love."

III. Something I would say, in the next place, as to THE MARK AT WHICH MINISTERS SHOULD AIM IN THEIR WORDS. I approach this point with a solemn sense of my own shortcomings and defects. I would simply tell you what I, for one, would desire always to set before myself, in order to be an example to believers in word.

I think, for one thing, that a minister should take his Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, for his example. "Know you not," said he, "that I must be about my Father's business." (Luke ii. 49.) Let that be the frame of mind in which every minister lives and speaks, and he will do well.

I think, for another thing, that a minister should aim to be the "minister of Christ everywhere." We are often tempted to forget that. We are tempted to lay aside the minister in private. That should not be. Once a minister, always and everywhere a minister of Jesus, should be our mark!

I think, for another thing, we should aim to have our conversation "always seasoned with grace." We should strive to have a vein of pure and undefiled religion running through our daily talk.

I think, for another thing, we should aim at "edification." If we cannot profit others, we should be always endeavoring to turn the stream in that direction.

I think, for another thing, we should aim at "faithfulness and boldness" in conversation. Like David, we should be willing to "speak of God's testimonies before kings," if need be. We should not be afraid to rebuke sin, and testify for God, if occasion requires.

I think, for another thing, we should aim at "wisdom" in speech. There is a right way of doing every thing. Discretion should be used in the choice of subjects, and the manner of introducing them. At the same time I must confess I almost regret that I have said anything on this point. We are far more likely to err on the side of excessive prudence, than on that of excessive rashness. We are more likely to remember the "keep silence," than the "time to speak."

Last, but not least, I think we should aim at "gentleness and meekness" in our words. Arguments, accompanied by anything like harshness and severity of manner seldom win hearts, though they may convince heads. Men would hear more, if they thought by our manner we really loved them. There is a mine of wisdom in Solomon's words, "a soft tongue breaks the bone." (Prow. xxv. 15.)

IV. Something I would say, in the last place, about THE MEANS WHICH A MINISTER OUGHT TO USE, in order to attain the mark at which he aims, in the matter of his words. He that would be an example in word, must look well to the state of his heart. "Keep your heart above all keeping." (Prow. iv. 23.) The tone of conversation will seldom rise above the level of our hearts. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." (Matt. xii. 34.) When our hearts are full of the things of God, we shall seldom be long in company without speaking of them.

He that would be an example in word, must exercise a prayerful diligence, and watch for opportunities of introducing the " one thing needful." May there not be an allusion to this in the words of the Apostle- "Walk in wisdom toward those who are without, redeeming the time," or opportunity? (Coloss. iv. 5.) That great man, Wilberforce, was in the habit of storing his mind with suitable subjects for conversation, before going into company. To use his own expression, he would "prepare launchers," in order to lead the company to profitable things. There is much that deserves consideration in this practice.

He that would be an example in word, must endeavor to realize God's presence. Let a minister do everything as unto the Lord. Let him so speak, as well as act, as if Christ were at his right hand; and he will not be likely to offend with his tongue.

He that would be an example to believers in word, should keep in remembrance the Lord Jesus Christ's second coming. "What manner of people ought you to be," (2 Peter iii. 11), says Peter, in anticipation of this solemn event.

I need not tell my brethren that each of these brief hints might easily be expanded. I merely throw them out for private consideration, and desire to conclude all I have said by TWO PRACTICAL REMARKS.

I believe it is difficult to calculate the harm done by a careless tongue, in any one professing godliness. I am sure that the careless tongue of a minister of the Gospel on a week-day, will pull down faster than he can build on a Sunday. To some it may appear a trifling thing. I may seem to attach an excessive importance to a minister's manner of talking in private. I trust however you will bear with me, if I mention an anecdote, which has made a deep impression on my own mind. An eminent preacher in a town was once sent for by a dying man. On entering the room, he saw one whose face he did not recognize. "You do not remember me," said the dying man. The minister confessed that he did not. "Well," said the man, "I heard of you as a famous preacher some years ago, and I resolved to go to your church and judge for myself. I went, and was exceedingly struck by your sermon. It produced a powerful effect on my conscience. I never rested until I got an opportunity of being in your company. I desired to have some communion with one whose sermon bad so much impressed me. I met you at a house where many others were assembled, and hoped to have derived some good from your society. But, to my surprise, you hardly ever spoke of God, or Christ, or the Bible, or the soul, or eternal things, all the night long. You laughed, you joked, you told good stories, you were very courteous, you were very agreeable. But you were not like the preacher I had heard. I went away convinced that you did not believe what you preached, and that religion was all a delusion. I shook off my feelings, I stifled my conscience, I went back to the world. And now I have sent for you to say, that I believe I have lost my soul."

I have given you, of course, the substance, and no more, of this story. It is one which I have never forgotten, since I first read it, though I am unable to recollect where I first met with it. I have often thought to myself, "how easily this might have happened to me, as well as to this minister! How often I have been in company, and not been a witness for Christ!

I believe, on the other hand, that it is very difficult to overrate the good that might be done, if ministers in private society would speak boldly and faithfully about the things of God. A word spoken in social communion is often worth hundreds spoken from the pulpit. It is honoring God, and God honors it. I have heard of signal instances of good done by Christian brethren, by speaking out faithfully and plainly about God to all whom they met. No doubt men's gifts are widely different. Some can more easily preach in one place, and some in another. But I believe that Cecil was quite right when he said, that the rarest and yet most useful preacher was "the parlour preacher." My own observation leads me to precisely the same conclusion. I know some ministers with whom you could not be in company five minutes hardly, without hearing them speak of their Master. My own soul feels warmed and cheered by such men, and my own heart is drawn towards them. I cannot but think how much more might be done for Christ, if all Christ's ministers were men of this sort. "A word spoken in season how good is it!" You will remember, many of you, that one remark let drop by Robert M'Cheyne in conversation with a stranger, was the conversion of that stranger's soul. He was sheltering from a storm in the entrance to an iron-furnace. He said to the man who was tending the fire, pointing at the same time to the fire, "What does that fire remind you of?" The question brought the man ultimately to Christ

Consider Your Ways

by J. C. Ryle

"Thus says the Lord of hosts; Consider your ways." Haggai 1:7

Beloved Friends and Brethren,
I wish to write a few words to you about your souls. I want those souls to be saved. And I invite you all to take the advice I give you today, and that is, to "Consider your ways." I write to you because the time is short. The day of grace is slipping away- the day of judgment is drawing near- the thread of life is winding up- a few more short years, and every soul of us will have gone to his own place- we shall each of us be in heaven or hell! I dare not wait until you pay attention to my sermons. By all means I must try to save some of you. If you will not consider, when I speak to you from the pulpit, it may be you will consider when I speak to you in print. I cannot reach your hearts, I know well. It is not in me, it needs the finger of God. But I can set before you my earnest wishes for every class among you, and I will do it- the Lord being my helper. Bear with me if I say things that sound sharp and hard. Set it down to my anxiety for your salvation; I mean it all for your good. I write no other things but what I have gathered from the Bible, and as such I commend them to your consciences. Consider what I say, and the Lord give you understanding in all things.

There are some true Christians among you whom I long to see more holy and more bright. You are they who have found out your own sinfulness and lost estate, and really believe on Jesus for the saving of your souls. The eyes of your understanding have been opened by the Spirit- He has led you to Christ, and you are new men. You have peace with God. Sin is no longer pleasant to you- the world has no longer the first place in your heart- all things are become new. You have ceased from trusting in your own works. You are willing to stand before the bar of God, and rest your soul on the finished work of Him who died for the ungodly. This is all your confidence, that you have washed your robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. I thank God heartily for what He has wrought in your souls, but I ask you also to consider your ways.

Brethren, I write to you about your sanctification. There are those who do you think are a class in our congregations that require little writing to- you are within the pale of salvation- you may be almost let alone. I cannot see it. I believe you need your minister's care and exhortation as much as any, if not more. I believe that on your growth in grace and holiness, not merely your own comfort, but the salvation of many souls, under God, depends. I believe that the converted members of a Church should be preached to, spoken to, warned, counseled, far more than they are. You need many words of direction. You are still in the wilderness. You have not crossed Jordan. You are not yet at home. I see Paul beseeching the Thessalonians that as they have received of Him, how they ought to walk and please God, so they would abound more and more. I see him warning them not to sleep, as others do, but to watch and be sober. I see Peter telling believers to give diligence to make their calling and election sure; to go on adding one grace to another- to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of Christ.

I wish to follow in their steps. I would remind you "that this is the will of God, even your sanctification," and I ask you to make it plain that it is your will too. You were not chosen out of the world to go to sleep, but that you might be holy. You were not called of God that you might sit still, but that you might walk worthy of your calling. Recollect those solemn words, "He that lacks these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and has forgotten that he was purged from his old sins." (2 Peter i. 9.) Why do I say these things? Is it because I do you think do not know them? No! but I want to stir you up by putting you in remembrance. Is it because I wish to discourage the poor in spirit, and make the heart of the righteous sad? No indeed! I would not willingly do this. Is it because I think true Christians can ever fall away? God forbid you should suppose I mean such a thing. But I say what I say because I am jealous for my Lord's honor.

I wish the elect of God to be indeed a holy nation, and the sons of adoption to live as becomes the children of a King. I want those who are light in the Lord to walk as children of light, shining more and more every day. And I say it for the good of the world. You are almost the only book that worldly people read. Surely your lives should be epistles of Christ, so plain that he who runs may read them. The world cares little for doctrine- the world knows nothing of experience- but the world can understand a close walk with God. And not least I say it because of the times you live in. I write it down deliberately, I believe there never were so many lukewarm saints as there are now. There never was a time in which a low and carnal standard of Christian behavior so much prevailed. There never were so many babes in grace in the family of God; so many who seem to sit still, and live on old experience; so many who appear to have need of nothing, and to be neither hungering nor thirsting after righteousness, as at the present time. I write this with all sorrow. It may be too painful to please some. But I ask you, as in God's sight, is it not true?

There is a generation of Christians in this age who grieve me to the heart. They make my blood run cold. I cannot understand them. For anything that man's eye can see, they make no progress. They never seem to get on. Years roll on, and they are just the same- the same besetting sins, the same infirmities of disposition, the same weakness in trial, the same chilliness of heart, the same apathy, the same faint resemblance to Christ; but no new knowledge, no increased interest in the kingdom, no freshness, no new strength, no new fruits, as if they grew. Are they not forgetting that growth is the proof of life- that even the tree grows, and the snail and the sloth move? Are they not forgetting how awfully far a man may go, and yet not be a true Christian? He may be like a wax figure, the very image of a believer, and yet not have within him the breath of God- he may have a name to live, and be dead after all.

Brethren, these are the reasons why I write so strongly. I want your Christianity to be unmistakable. I want you all to grow really, and to do more than others. Let us all henceforth remember Sardis and Laodicea- let us resolve to be more holy and more bright. Let us bury our idols. Let us put away all strange gods. Let us cast out the old leaven. Let us lay aside every weight and besetting sin. Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and perfect holiness in the fear of God. Let us renew our covenant with our beloved Lord. Let us aim at the highest and best things. Let us resolve by God's blessing to be more holy, and then I know and am persuaded we shall be more useful and more happy. I name some things for prayerful consideration.

1. Let us then, for one thing, begin with a humble confession of past unprofitableness and shortcomings. Let us acknowledge with shame and contrition that we have not hitherto lived up to our light. We ought to have been the salt of the earth- but there has been little savor of Christ about us. We ought to have been the light of the world- but we have most of us been little glimmering sparks that

could scarcely be seen. We ought to have been a peculiar people- but the difference between us and the world has been faint and small. We ought to have been, like the Levites in Israel, a distinct people among professing Christians- but we have too often behaved as if we belonged to some other tribe. We ought to have looked on this world as an inn, and we have settled down in it as if it were our home- it ought to have been counted our school of training for eternity, and we have been at ease in it as if it were our continuing city, or trifled away time in it, as if we were meant to play and not to learn.
We ought to have been anxious for nothing, and we have been anxious and troubled about many things- we have allowed the affairs of this life to eat out the heart of our spirituality, and have been cumbered with much serving.

How rarely we have heard the Gospel like men in earnest- and read the Bible as if we were feeding on it- and prayed as if we wanted an answer! How poor and feeble has been our witness against sin! How seldom have we looked like men about our Father's business! How little have we known about singleness of eye, and wholeness of heart, and walking in the spirit! How weak has been our faith, how feeble our hope, how cold our charity! How few of us have lived as if we believed all that is written in the Word, and moved through life like pilgrims traveling to a better land. Oh! Brethren, have we not good reason to be ashamed when we think on these things? Very grievous are they, and we ought to feel it. Let us begin with self-abasement; let us cry, "God be merciful to us sinners- take away our iniquity, for we have done very foolishly."

2. In the next place, let us all seek to "abide in Christ" more thoroughly than we have hitherto. Christ is the true spring of life in every believer's soul, the head on which every member depends, the corner stone of all real sanctification. Whenever I see a child of God becoming less holy than he was, I know the secret of it- he is clinging less firmly to Christ than he did. Our root must be right, if our fruit is to abound. Brethren, let us strive after close union and communion with Christ. Let us go to Him oftener, speak with Him more frequently, trust Him more wholly, look to Him more constantly, lean upon Him more entirely. This is the way to go through the wilderness without fainting, and to run the race set before us with patience. Let us live the life of faith in the Son of God. He is the vine, and we are the branches; let all our strength be drawn from Him- separate from Him we can do nothing. He is the Sun of righteousness- let us seek our comfort in Him, and not in our own frames and feelings.

He is the bread of life- let us feed on Him day by day, as Israel on the manna, and not on our own experiences. Let Christ become more and more all things to us! His blood our peace- His intercession our comfort- His word our warrant- His grace our strength- His sympathy our support- His speedy coming our hope. Let others spend their time on new books if they will, let us rather study to learn Christ. We know a little of Christ as our Savior, but Oh! how small a portion have we seen of the fulness that is in Him! Like the Indians, when America was first discovered, we are not aware of the amazing value of the gold and treasure in our hands. Believe me, if we did but realize the blessedness of free and full forgiveness in Him, we should be men of a different stamp. The man who feels the blood of atonement sprinkled on his conscience- the man who enjoys assurance that he is washed, and justified, and accepted in the Beloved, this is the man who will be holy indeed, this is the man who will bear much fruit. He will labor cheerfully- he will suffer patiently- he will witness confidently- he will press on unflinchingly- he will love warmly. Redemption is ever fresh upon his mind, and his thought is, "what shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits?" Brethren, let us cleave to Christ more closely. Let us draw near to the cross. Let us sit at the feet of Jesus. Let us drink into the spirit of the apostle, when he said, "to me to live is Christ." Let us do this, and we shall grow.

3. And let us beware of excuses. Reasons will never be lacking in our minds why we cannot be bright and eminent Christians just now. It is very possible to admire a high standard of spirituality in others, while we are content with very low practice in ourselves. We persuade ourselves there is something peculiar in our particular case, which makes it almost impossible to shine. But let all excuses be received, like Babylonian ambassadors, with great suspicion. They are generally the devil's coinage. Let us settle it firmly in our hearts, that there are few of us indeed who cannot glorify God just where we are without any change. All our excuses are as dust in the balance, when placed against that promise, "My grace is sufficient for you."

Let us not deceive ourselves. By the grace of God we may be bright saints even now. Let us not say, "We have bad health." Remember the apostle Paul- he had a thorn in the flesh- some never ceasing ailment probably, and yet it seemed a spur rather than a hindrance to his soul. Let us not say, "We have many trials." Remember Job- wave upon wave came rolling over him, and yet his faith did not give way- and the record of his patience is on high. Let us not say, "We have families and children to make us anxious and keep us back." Remember David- none was ever so tried at home as he was, yet he was a man after God's own heart. Let us not say, "We have much distracting business to attend on." Remember Daniel- he had far more affairs on his hands, probably, than any of us, yet he found time to pray three times a day, and was a proverb for godliness.

Let us not say, "I stand alone, the times are evil, and none around me serve God." Remember Noah- the whole world was against him, yet he did not give way. By faith he held fast. Let us not say, "We live in families where God is not thought of." Remember Obadiah in Ahab's house, and Nero's servants at Rome. What are our difficulties compared with theirs? Let us not say, "We are poor and unlearned." Remember Peter and John. They were as poor and unlearned as any of us, yet they were pillars of the early Church; they were of the number of those who turned the world upside down.

No! Brethren, such excuses for not being more holy will never do, while grace may be had. Let us say rather, "We are slothful, and take no trouble- we are unbelieving, and make no bold attempt- we are worldly, and our eyes are too dim to see the beauty of holiness- we are proud, and we cannot humble ourselves to take pains." Let us say this, and we shall more likely speak the truth.

There are always ways in which we may glorify God- there are passive graces as well as active graces. But the way of the slothful is always a hedge of thorns. The wall of Jerusalem was soon built when the Jews had "a mind to work." We complain of the devil, but there is no devil after all like our own hearts! We have not grace because we do not ask it. The fault is all our own.

4. Let us be on our guard against false doctrine. Unsound faith will never be the mother of really sound practice, and in these latter days, departures from the faith abound. See then that your loins be girt about with truth, and be very jealous of receiving anything which cannot be proved by the Bible. Do not think for a moment that false doctrine will meet you face to face, saying, "I am false doctrine, and I want to come into your heart." Satan does not go to work in that way. He dresses up false doctrine like Jezebel- he paints her face and attires her hair, and tries to make her like truth. Do not think that those who preach error will never preach anything that is true. Error, would do little harm if that was the case. No! error will come before you mingled with much that is sound and scriptural.

The sermon will be all right excepting a few sentences. The book will be all good excepting a few pages. And this is the chief danger of religious error in these times- it is like the subtle poisons of days gone by- it works so deceitfully that it throws men off their guard. Brethren, take care. Remember, that even Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Keep clear of any system of religion which confounds the world and true believers, and makes no broad distinction between those who are true children of God in a congregation, and those who are not. Do not be carried away by an appearance of great self denial and humility. It is far easier to fast and wear sackcloth, and be of a sad countenance, than to receive thoroughly the doctrine of justification by faith without the deeds of the law.

Call no man father upon earth. Do not build your faith on any minister or set of ministers. Let no man become your Pope. Make no Christian your standard of what is right in faith or practice, however high his name, his rank, or his learning. Let your creed be the Bible, and nothing but the Bible; and your example Christ, and nothing short of Him. Take heed, lest your minds be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. Be careful what books you read on religious subjects- many books of this day are leavened with doctrines which spoil the Gospel. Examine yourselves often whether you are standing in the old paths– our lost estate by nature- our recovery through our Savior's kindness and love- our need of regeneration and renewal- our justification through grace- these are the grand doctrines, as Paul told Titus; and these are the points on which we must be sound, if we would maintain good works.

5. Let us resolve to make conscience of little things in our daily religion. Let us not neglect little duties- let us not allow ourselves in little faults. Whatever we may like to think, nothing is really of small importance that affects the soul. All diseases are small at the beginning. Many a death-bed begins with a "little cold." Nothing that can grow is large all at once- the greatest sin must have a beginning. Nothing that is great comes to perfection in a day- characters and habits are all the result of little actions. Little strokes of the hammer made that ark which saved Noah. Little pegs held firm that tabernacle which was the glory of Israel. We too are traveling through a wilderness- let us be like the family of Merari, and be careful not to leave the pegs behind. (Numbers 4: 32.)
Believers, do not forget how full the Epistles are of instruction about the particulars of Christian life. The apostles seem to take nothing for granted. They do not think it sufficient to say, "be holy," -they take care to specify and name the things in which holiness is shown. See how they dwell on the duties of husbands and wives, masters and servants, parents and children, rulers and subjects, old people and young. See how they single out and urge upon us industry in business, kindness in temper, forgivingness in disposition, honesty, truthfulness, temperance, meekness, gentleness, humility, charity, patience, courtesy.

See how they exhort us to honor all men, to govern our tongues, to season our speech with grace, to abstain from foolish talking and jesting, not to please ourselves only, to redeem the time, to be content with such things as we have, and whether we eat or drink, to do all in the name of the Lord Jesus. Brethren, some people think that to dwell on such things is bondage; but I believe it good to remind you of them- I am sure it is safe. If the Spirit of God thought it wise to dwell so much on them in the word, I cannot doubt it must be wise for us to attend to them in our walk. It is much more easy to profess holiness in a general way, than to carry it out in particulars; and I fear that many talk familiarly of sanctification in the lump, who know but little of it in the piece. I firmly believe that looseness about these little things in our daily behavior, is a special means of grieving the Spirit of God, and of bringing upon us, in consequence, barrenness and leanness of soul.

6. Let us be more active in endeavors to do good to the world. Surely we may all do far more for unconverted souls than we have ever done yet. Many of us, alas! take things so quietly, that a man might suppose every one about us was converted, and the kingdom of Christ fully set up. I pray you let us lay aside these lazy habits. Are all our friends and relations in Christ? Are all our neighbors and acquaintances inside the ark? Have all within our reach received the truth in the love of it? Have we asked them all to come in? Have we told them all the way of salvation, and our own experience that the way is good? Have we done all that we can? Have we tried every means? Is there no one left to whom we can show Christian kindness, and offer the Gospel? Can we lift up our hands to God, as one by one, souls around us are taken away, and say, "Our eyes, O Lord, have not seen this blood, and its loss cannot in any wise be laid at our door!"

Surely, my Brethren, grace ought to be as active a principle in trying to spread godliness, as sin is in trying to spread evil. Surely, if we had a tenth part of the zeal which Satan shows to enlarge his kingdom, we should be far more full of care for other men's souls. Where is our mercy and compassion, if we can see disease of soul about us, and not desire to make it less? Let us awake to a right understanding of our responsibility in this matter. We complain of the world being full of wickedness. It is so. But do we each do our own part in trying to make it better? Do we act upon the old saying, "The city is soon clean when every man sweeps before his own door?" Let us try more to do good to all. Let us reckon it a painful thing to go to heaven alone- let us endeavor, as far as we can, to take companions with us. Let us no longer be silent witnesses, and muffled bells. Let us warn, and beseech, and invite, and rebuke, and advise, and testify of Christ, on the right hand and on the left, according as we have opportunity, saying to men, "Come with us, and we will do you good- the light is sweet, come and walk in the light of the Lord." Let us not suppose no good is done in this way, because our eyes do not see it- we must walk by faith, and not by sight. Let us not be weary in well doing, because we appear to labor in vain; we may rest assured we are in the hands of a good Master- in due time we shall reap if we faint not.

Activity in doing good is one receipt for being cheerful Christians- it is like exercise to the body, it keeps the soul in health. It is one great proof of love towards the Lord Jesus, and a proof that can only be given while we are alive. Now is the time for doing good to others, and not hereafter. In heaven there will be no missionary societies, no Bible societies, no visiting societies, no careless to warn, no ignorant to instruct, no sick to minister to, no mourners to comfort, no fainting saints to cheer. In heaven there will be love, joy, peace, thankfulness- but in heaven there will be no place for faith, zeal, courage, labor, patience- their occupation will be over- if ever we mean to show these graces it must be now. Oh! let us make haste, for the time is short. Let us be like Christian, in Pilgrim's Progress, when his burden fell off at the sepulcher, his first act was to try to awaken sleeping souls.

7. Lastly, let us believers take more pains to edify others! It is incredible and sad to see how Scripture speaks on this matter, and then to observe the conduct of many of Christ's people. Paul tells the Corinthians, that the members of Christ "should have the same care one for another." He says to the Thessalonians, "Edify one another, even as also you do." He says to the Hebrews, "Exhort one another daily, lest any be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin;" and again, "Consider one another to provoke unto love and good works; exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the day approaching." Brethren, I fear we fall very short of the New

Testament Christians in this respect. We are sadly apt to lose sight of this edifying one another when we are in the company of believing friends. Prayer, and the Word, and godly conversation are not put in the foremost place, and so we separate, being nothing the better, but rather worse. Far too often there is so much coldness, and restraint, and reserve, and backwardness, that a man might imagine we were ashamed of Christ, and that we thought it proper to hold our tongues, and not make mention of the name of the Lord.

These things ought not so to be. We profess that we are all fighting the same fight- contending with the same enemies- plagued with the same evil hearts- trusting in the same Lord- led by the same Spirit- eating the same bread- journeying towards the same home. Then why should we not show it? Why should we not be always ready to commune with each other? Why should we not try to help each other forward- to profit by each others experience- to bear each others burdens- to strengthen each others hands- to quicken each others hearts- to speak with each other, like Moses and Jethro, of the things pertaining to our King. There is a fault among us here, and one that ought to be amended.

Let us bring out the Bible more when we get together. We none of us know it all yet; our brother may have found some pearl in it which has escaped our eyes, and we perhaps may show him something in return. It is the common map by which we all journey; let us not behave as if we had each a private map to be studied in a corner, and kept to ourselves. Oh! that the Word were like a burning fire shut up in our bones, so that we could not forbear speaking of it.

Let us speak oftener about the eternal home towards which we travel. Children, before their holidays, love to talk of home- their hearts are full, they cannot help it- why should not we? Surely it ill becomes the citizens of heaven to say nothing of heaven to those with whom they expect to dwell forever. Let us aim at closer communion with all true believers. This will go far to procure Christ's presence with us on our journey. The two disciples who went to Emmaus were talking of holy things when they were joined by the Lord. Let us speak often one to another, and the Lord will hearken, and remember it. This too will mightily promote the growth and comfort of our souls. The fire within us needs constant stirring, as well as feeding, to keep it bright. Many can testify that they find Christian fellowship a special means of grace. As iron sharpens iron, so does the countenance of a man his friend- and the weakest too may sharpen the strongest, even as the whetstone does the scythe. He that tries to promote holiness in others shall reap a blessed reward in his own soul- he waters others, and he shall be watered himself.

Brethren, I have thought it good to name these things in writing to you about sanctification. I desire to do it in all humility. I need reminding of them as much as any. Let us all resolve to set them before ourselves, and I am sure we shall not repent of it. And now, beloved Brethren, I am done; I have told you one and all the longings and desires of my heart. Conversion for the unconverted, decision for the wavering, growth in grace for the believer- this seals up the sum of my wishes for you. I can wish you nothing better, for this is the way to true happiness. I will wish you nothing less, for without these things I am sure there is no peace.

Consider well what I have said. Death may be busy among us very soon- let us all be found in Christ and prepared. Satan will be busy among us no doubt- let us all watch and pray. Let us beware of a spirit of slumber and formality, and especially in private reading and praying. Let our path to the fountain be worn with daily journeys, let our key to the treasury of grace be bright with constant use.
Let us pray more, and let us pray more earnestly. Let those who never prayed begin to pray. Let those who have prayed pray better. Pray for yourselves- that you may know the Lord Jesus, and cleave to Him- that you may be kept from falling- that you may serve your generation- that you may be sober in prosperity, patient in trial, and humble at all times. Pray for the congregation to which you belong- that the word of the Lord may have free course in it, and be glorified- that the household of faith may become stronger and stronger, and the household of unbelief weaker and weaker. Pray for your country- that her ministers may preach the Gospel, and be sound in the faith- that her rulers may value the Bible, and govern according to it- and that so her candlestick may not be taken away. And pray not least for your minister- that he may be strong to work, and willing to labor for your good, that all his sicknesses may be sanctified, and all his health given to the Lord- that he may be ever taught of the Spirit, and thus be able to teach others- that he may be kept faithful unto death, and so be ready to depart when he is called. Let us all pray, one for the other- I for you, and you for me- and we shall be blessed in our deed!

"God is my record how greatly I long after you all." Philippians 1:8.

CHRIST'S INVITATION

by J. C. Ryle

"Come unto Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28

The text which heads this paper is one which deserves to be written in letters of gold. Few verses of Scripture have done more good to the souls of people than this old familiar invitation of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us examine it carefully, and see what it contains.

There are four points in the text before us, to which I am going to ask attention. On each of these I have somewhat to say.

First. Who is the Speaker of this invitation?

Secondly. To whom is this invitation addressed?

Thirdly. What does the Speaker ask us to do?

Lastly. What does the Speaker offer to give?

I. In the first place, **Who is the SPEAKER of the invitation which heads this paper?** Who is it that invites so freely, and offers so largely? Who is it that says to your conscience this day, "Come—come unto Me"?

We have a right to ask these questions. We live in a lying world. The earth is full of cheats, shams, deceptions, impositions and falsehoods. The value of a promissory note depends entirely on the name which is signed at the bottom. When we hear of a mighty Promiser, we have a right to say, Who is this? and what is His name?

The Speaker of the invitation before you is the greatest and best friend that man has ever had. It is the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God.

He is One who is ALMIGHTY. He is God the Father's fellow and equal. He is very God of very God. By Him were all things made. In His hand are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. He has all power in heaven and earth. In Him all fullness dwells. He has the keys of death and hell. He is now the appointed Mediator between God and man—He will one day be the Judge and King of all the earth. When such a One as this speaks, you may safely trust Him. What He promises He is able to perform. (Zech. 13:7; John 1:3; Col. 2:3, Matt. 28:18; Col. 1:19; Rev. 1:18.)

He is One who is most LOVING. He loved us so that He left heaven for our sakes, and laid aside for a season the glory that He had with the Father. He loved us so that He was born of a woman for our sakes, and lived thirty-three years in this sinful world. He loved us so that He undertook to pay our mighty debt to God, and died upon the cross to make atonement for our sins. When such a One as this speaks, He deserves a hearing. When He promises a thing, you need not be afraid to trust Him.

He is One who knows the heart of man most thoroughly. He took on Him a body like our own, and was made like man in all things, sin only excepted. He knows by experience what man has to go through. He has tasted poverty, and weariness, and hunger, and thirst, and pain, and temptation. He is acquainted with all our condition upon earth. He has "suffered Himself being tempted." When such a One as this makes an offer, He makes it with perfect wisdom. He knows exactly what you and I need. (Heb. 2:18.)

He is One who never breaks His word. He always fulfills His promises. He never fails to do what He undertakes. He never disappoints the soul that trusts Him. Mighty as He is, there is one thing which He cannot do—it is impossible for Him to lie. (Heb. 6:18.) When such an One as this makes a promise, you need not doubt that He will stand to it. You may depend with confidence on His word.

You have now heard who sends the invitation which is before you today. It is the Lord Jesus Christ. Give Him the credit due to His name. Grant Him a full and impartial bearing. Believe that a promise from His mouth deserves your best attention. See that you refuse not Him who speaks. It is written, "See that you don't refuse him who speaks. For if they didn't escape when they refused him who warned on the Earth, how much more will we not escape who turn away from him who warns from heaven." (Heb. 12:25.)

II. I will now show you, in the second place, **to whom the invitation before you is addressed.**

The Lord Jesus Christ addresses "all who labor and are heavy-laden." The expression is deeply comforting and instructive. It is wide, sweeping, and comprehensive. It describes the case of millions in every part of the world.

Where are the laboring and heavy-laden? They are everywhere. They are a multitude that man can scarcely number; they are to be found in every climate, and in every country under the sun. They live in Europe, in Asia, in Africa, and in America. They dwell by the banks of the Seine, as well as the banks of the Thames—by the banks of the Mississippi as well as the banks of the Niger. They abound under republics as well as under monarchies—under liberal governments as well as under despotism. Everywhere you will find trouble, care, sorrow, anxiety, murmuring, discontent, and unrest. What does it mean? What does it all come to? People are "laboring and heavy-laden."

To what class do the laboring and heavy laden belong? They belong to every class—there is no exception. They are to be found among masters as well as among servants—among rich as well as among poor—among kings as well as among subjects—among learned as well as among ignorant people. In every class you will find trouble, care, sorrow, anxiety, murmuring, discontent, and unrest. What does it mean? What does it all come to? People are "laboring and heavy-laden."

How shall we explain this? What is the cause of the state of things which I have just tried to describe? Did God create man at the beginning to be unhappy? Most certainly not. Are human governments to blame because people are not happy? At most to a very slight extent. The fault lies far too deep to be reached by human laws. There is another cause, a cause which many unhappily refuse to see. THAT CAUSE IS SIN.

Sin and departure from God, are the true reasons why people are everywhere laboring and heavy-laden. Sin is the universal disease which infects the whole earth. Sin brought in thorns and thistles at the beginning, and obliged man to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow. Sin is the reason why the "whole creation groans and travails in pain," and the "foundations of the earth are out of course." (Rom. 8:22; Psalm 82:5.) Sin is the cause of all the burdens which now press down mankind. Most people know it not, and weary themselves in vain to explain the state of things around them. But sin is the great root and foundation of all sorrow, whatever proud man may think. How much people ought to hate sin!

Are you one of those who are laboring and heavy-laden? I think it very likely that you are. I am firmly persuaded that there are thousands of men and women in the world who are inwardly uncomfortable, and yet will not confess it. They feel a burden on their hearts, which they would gladly get rid of; and yet they do not know the way. They have a conviction that all is not right in their inward man, which they never tell to anyone. Husbands do not tell it to their wives, and wives do not tell it to their husbands; children do not tell it to their parents, and friends do not tell it to their friends. But the inward burden lies heavily on many hearts! There is far more unhappiness than the world sees. Disguise it as some will, there are multitudes uncomfortable because they know they are not prepared to meet God. And you, who are reading this volume, perhaps are one.

If any reader of this paper is "laboring and heavy-laden," you are the very person to whom the Lord Jesus Christ sends an invitation this day. If you have an aching heart, and a sore conscience—if you want rest for a weary soul, and know not where to find it—if you want peace for a guilty heart, and are at a loss which way to turn—you are the man, you are the woman, to whom Jesus speaks

today. There is hope for you. I bring you good tidings. "Come unto Me," says the Lord Jesus, "and I will give you rest."

You may tell me this invitation cannot be meant for you, because you are not good enough to be invited by Christ. I answer, that Jesus does not speak to the good—but to the "laboring and heavy-laden." Do you know anything of this feeling? Then you are one to whom He speaks.

You may tell me that the invitation cannot be meant for you, because you are a sinner, and know nothing about religion. I answer, that it matters nothing what you are, or what you have been. Do you at this moment feel "laboring and heavy-laden"? Then you are one to whom Jesus speaks.

You may tell me that you cannot think the invitation is meant for you, because you are not yet converted, and have not got a new heart. I answer, that Christ's invitation is not addressed to the converted—but to the "laboring and heavy-laden." Is this what you feel? Is there any burden on your heart? Then you are one of those to whom Christ speaks.

You may tell me that you have no right to accept this invitation, because you do not know that you are one of God's elect. I answer, that you have no right to put words in Christ's mouth, which He has not used. He does not say, "Come unto Me, all you that are elect." He addresses all the "laboring and heavy-laden ones," without any exception. Are you one of them? Is there weight within on your soul? This is the only question you have to decide. If you are, you are one of those to whom Christ speaks.

If you are one of the "laboring and heavy-laden" ones, once more I entreat you not to refuse the invitation which I bring you today. Do not forsake your own mercies. The harbor of refuge is freely before you—do not turn away from it. The best of friends holds out His hand to you—let not pride, or self-righteousness, or fear of man's ridicule, make you reject His offered love. Take Him at His word. Say to Him, "Lord Jesus Christ, I am one of those whom Your invitation suits—I am laboring and heavy-laden. Lord, what will You have me to do?"

III. I will now show you, in the third place, **what the Lord Jesus Christ asks you to do.** Three words make up the sum and substance of the invitation which He sends you today. If you are "laboring and heavy-laden," Jesus says, "Come unto Me."

There is a grand simplicity about the three words now before you. Short and plain as the sentence seems, it contains a mine of deep truth and solid comfort. Weigh it—look at it—consider it—ponder it well. I believe that it is one half of saving Christianity to understand what Jesus means, when He says, "Come unto Me."

Mark well, that the Lord Jesus does not bid the laboring and heavy-laden "go and work." Those words would carry no comfort to heavy consciences—it would be like requiring labor from an exhausted man. No—He bids them "Come!" He does not say, "Pay Me what you owe." That demand would drive a broken heart into despair—it would be like claiming a debt from a ruined bankrupt. No—He says, "Come!" He does not say, "Stand still and wait." That command would only be a mockery—it would be like promising to give medicine at the end of a week to one at the point of death." No—He says, "Come!" Today—at once—without any delay, "Come unto Me."

But, after all, what is meant by coming to Christ? It is an expression often used—but often misunderstood. Beware that you make no mistake at this point. Here unhappily, thousands turn aside out of the right course, and miss the truth. Beware that you do not make shipwreck at the very mouth of the harbor.

(a) Take notice, that **coming to Christ means something more than coming to church and chapel**. You may fill your place regularly at a place of worship, and attend all outward means of grace, and yet not be saved. All this is not coming to Christ.

(b) Take notice, that **coming to Christ is something more than coming to the Lord's table**. You may be a regular member and communicant; you may never be missing in the lists of those who eat that bread and drink that wine, which the Lord commanded to be received, and yet you may never be saved. All this is not coming to Christ.

(c) Take notice, that **coming to Christ is something more than coming to ministers**. You may be a constant hearer of some popular preacher, and a zealous partisan of all his opinions, and yet never be saved. All this is not coming to Christ.

(d) Take notice, once more, that **coming to Christ is something more than coming to the possession of head-knowledge about Him**. You may know the whole system of evangelical doctrine, and be able to talk, argue, and dispute on every jot of it, and yet never be saved. All this is not coming to Christ.

Coming to Christ is coming to Him with the heart by simple FAITH. Believing on Christ is coming to Him, and coming to Christ is believing on Him. It is that act of the soul which takes place when a man, feeling his own sins, and despairing of all other hope, commits himself to Christ for salvation, ventures on Him, trusts Him, and casts himself wholly on Him. When a man turns to Christ empty that he may be filled, sick that he may be healed, hungry that he may be satisfied, thirsty that he may be refreshed, needy that he may be enriched, dying that he may have life, lost that he may be saved, guilty that he may be pardoned, sin-defiled that he may be cleansed, confessing that Christ alone can supply his need—then he comes to Christ. When he uses Christ as the Jews used the city of refuge, as the starving Egyptians used Joseph, as the dying Israelites used the brazen serpent—then he comes to Christ. It is the empty soul's venture on a full Savior. It is the drowning man's grasp on the hand held out to help him. It is the sick man's reception of a healing medicine. This, and nothing more than this, is coming to Christ.

Let every reader of this paper accept at this point a word of caution. Beware of mistakes as to this matter of coming to Christ. Do not stop short in any half-way house. Do not allow the devil and the world to cheat you out of eternal life. Do not suppose that you will ever get any good from Christ, unless you go straight, direct, thoroughly, and entirely to Christ Himself. Trust not in a little outward formality; do not content yourself with a regular use of outward means. A lantern is an excellent help in a dark night—but it is not home. Means of grace are useful aids—but they are not Christ. Oh, no! Press onward, forward, upward, until you have had personal, heart-felt dealings with Christ Himself.

Beware of mistakes as to the manner of coming to Christ. Dismiss from your mind forever all idea of worthiness, merit, and fitness in

yourself. Throw away all notions of goodness, righteousness, and personal deservings. Think not that you can bring anything to recommend you, or to make you deserving of Christ's notice. You must come to Him as a poor, guilty, undeserving sinner, or you cannot come at all. "But to him who doesn't work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness. " (Rom. 4:5.) **It is the peculiar mark of the faith that justifies and saves, that it brings to Christ nothing but an empty hand.**

Last—but not least, let there be no mistake in your mind as to the special character of the man who has come to Christ, and is a true Christian. He is not an angel; he is not a half-angelic being, in whom is no weakness, or blemish, or infirmity—he is nothing of the kind. He is nothing more than a sinner who has found out his sinfulness, and has learned the blessed secret of living by faith in Christ. What was the glorious company of the apostles and prophets? What was the noble army of martyrs? What were Isaiah, Daniel, Peter, James, John, Paul, Polycarp, Chrysostom, Augustine, Luther, Ridley, Latimer, Bunyan, Baxter, Whitefield, Venn, Chalmers, Bickersteth, M'Cheyne? What were they all—but sinners who knew and felt their sins, and trusted only in Christ? What were they—but people who accepted the invitation I bring you this day, and came to Christ by faith? By this faith they lived—in this faith they died. In themselves and their doings they saw nothing worth mentioning; but in Christ they saw all that their souls required.

The invitation of Christ is now before you. If you never listened to it before, listen to it today. Broad, full, free, wide, simple, tender, kind—that invitation will leave you without excuse if you refuse to accept it. There are some invitations, perhaps, which it is wiser and better to decline. There is one which ought always to be accepted that one is before you today. Jesus Christ is saying, "Come—come unto Me."

IV. I will now show you, in the last place, **what the Lord Jesus Christ promises to give.** He does not ask the "laboring and heavy-laden" to come to Him for nothing. He holds out gracious inducements—He allures them by sweet offers. "Come unto Me," He says, "and I will give you **rest**."

Rest is a pleasant thing. Few are the men and women in this weary world who do not know the sweetness of it. The man who has been laboring hard with his hands all the week, working in iron, or brass, or stone, or wood, or clay—digging, lifting, hammering, cutting—he knows the comfort of going home on Saturday night, and having one day of rest. The man who has been toiling hard with his head all day—writing, copying, calculating, composing, scheming, planning—he knows the comfort of laying aside his papers, and having a little rest. Yes! rest is a pleasant thing.

And rest is one of the principal offers which the Gospel makes to man. "Come to me," says the world, "and I will give you riches and pleasure." "Come with me," says the devil, "and I will give you greatness, power, and wisdom." "Come unto Me," says the Lord Jesus Christ," and I will give you rest."

But what is the nature of that rest which the Lord Jesus promises to give? It is no mere repose of body. A man may have that and yet be miserable. You may place him in a palace, and surround him with every possible comfort. You may give him money in abundance, and everything that money can buy. You may free him from all care about tomorrow's bodily needs, and take away the need of laboring for a single hour. All this you may do to a man, and yet not give him true rest. Thousands know this only too well by bitter experience. Their hearts are starving in the midst of worldly plenty. Their inward man is sick and weary, while their outward man is clothed in purple and fine linen, and fares sumptuously every day! Yes—a man may have houses, and lands, and money, and horses, and carriages, and soft beds, and good fare, and attentive servants—and yet not have true rest.

The rest that Christ gives is an inward and spiritual thing. It is rest of heart, rest of conscience, rest of mind, rest of affection, rest of will. It is rest, from a comfortable sense of sins being all forgiven and guilt all put away. It is rest, from a solid hope of good things to come, laid up beyond the reach of disease, and death, and the grave. It is rest, from the well-grounded feeling, that the great business of life is settled, its great end provided for, that in time all is well done, and in eternity heaven will be our home.

(a) Rest such as this the Lord Jesus gives to those who come to Him, by showing them His own finished work on the cross, by clothing them in His own perfect righteousness, and washing them in His own precious blood. When a man begins to see that the Son of God actually died for his sins, his soul begins to taste something of inward quiet and peace.

(b) Rest such as this the Lord Jesus gives to those who come to Him, by revealing Himself as their ever-living High Priest in heaven, and God reconciled to them through Him. When a man begins to see that the Son of God actually lives to intercede for him, he will begin to feel something of inward quiet and peace.

(c) Rest such as this the Lord Jesus gives to those who come to Him, by implanting His Spirit in their hearts, witnessing with their spirits that they are God's children, and that old things are passed away, and all things are become new. When a man begins to feel an inward drawing towards God as a Father, and a sense of being an adopted and forgiven child, his soul begins to feel something of quiet and peace.

(d) Rest such as this the Lord Jesus gives to those who come to Him, by dwelling in their hearts as King, by putting all things within in order, and giving to each faculty its place and work. When a man begins to find order in his heart in place of rebellion and confusion, his soul begins to understand something of quiet and peace. There is no true inward happiness, until the true King is on the throne.

(e) Rest such as this is the privilege of all believers in Christ. Some know more of it and some less; some feel it only at distant intervals, and some feel it almost always. Few enjoy the sense of it without many a battle with unbelief, and many a conflict with fear. But all who truly come to Christ, know something of this rest. Ask them, with all their complaints and doubts, whether they would give up Christ and go back to the world. You will get only one answer. Weak as their sense of rest may be, they have got hold of something which does them good, and that something they cannot let go.

(f) Rest such as this is within reach of all who are willing to seek it and receive it. The poor man is not so poor but he may have it; the ignorant man is not so ignorant but he may know it; the sick man is not so weak and helpless but he may get hold of it. Faith, simple faith, is the one thing needful in order to possess Christ's rest. **Faith in Christ is the grand secret of happiness.** Neither poverty, nor ignorance, nor tribulation, nor distress can prevent men and women feeling rest of soul, if they will only come to Christ and believe.

(g) Rest such as this is the possession which makes people independent of worldly changes. Banks may break, and money make itself wings and flee away. War, pestilence, and famine may break in on a land, and the foundations of the earth be out of course. Health and vigor may depart, and the body be crushed down by loathsome disease. Death may cut down wife, and children, and friends, until he who once enjoyed them stands entirely alone. But the man who has come to Christ by faith, will still possess something which can never be taken from him. Like Paul and Silas, he will sing in prison. Like Job, bereaved of children and property, he will bless the name of the Lord. (Acts 16:25; Job 1:21.) He is the truly independent man who possesses that which nothing can take away.

(h) Rest such as this is the possession which makes people truly rich. It lasts; it wears; it endures. It lightens the solitary home. It smooths the dying pillow. It goes with people when they are placed in their coffins. It abides with them when they are laid in their graves. When friends can no longer help us, and money is no longer of use—when doctors can no longer relieve our pain, and nurses can no longer minister to our needs—when sense begins to fail, and eye and ear can no longer do their duty—then, even then, the "rest" which Christ gives will be shed abroad in the heart of the believer. The words "rich" and "poor" will change their meaning entirely one day. He is the only rich man who has come to Christ by faith, and from Christ has received rest. This is the rest which Christ offers to give to all who are "laboring and heavy-laden."

This is the rest for which He invites them to come to Him. This is the rest which I want you to enjoy, and to which I bring you an invitation this day. May God grant that the invitation may not be brought to you in vain!

(1) Does any reader of this paper feel ignorant of the "rest" of which I have been speaking? If so, what have you got from your religion? You live in a Christian land; you profess and call yourself a Christian. You have probably attended a Christian place of worship many years. You would not like to be called an infidel or a heathen. Yet all this time what benefit have you received from your Christianity! What solid advantage have you obtained from it? For anything one can see, you might just as well have been a Turk or a Jew.

Take advice this day, and resolve to possess the realities of Christianity as well as the name, and the substance as well as the form. Do not be content until you know something of the peace, and hope, and joy, and consolation which Christians enjoyed in former times. Ask yourself what is the reason that you are a stranger to the feelings which men and women experienced in the days of the Apostles. Ask yourself why you do not "rejoice in the Lord," and feel "peace with God," like the Romans and Philippians, to whom Paul wrote. Religious feelings, no doubt, are often deceptive; but surely the religion which produces no feelings at all is not the religion of the New Testament. The religion which gives a man no inward comfort, can never be a religion from God. Take heed to yourself. Never be satisfied until you know something of the "rest that is in Christ."

(2) Does any reader of this paper desire rest of soul, and yet knows not where to turn for it? Remember this day, that there is only one place where it can be found. Governments cannot give it; education will not impart it; worldly amusements cannot supply it; money will not purchase it. It can only be found in the hand of Jesus Christ—and to His hand you must turn, if you would find peace within.

There is no royal road to rest of soul. Let that never be forgotten. There is only one way to the Father—Jesus Christ; one door into heaven—Jesus Christ; and one path to heart-peace—Jesus Christ. By that way all "laboring and heavy-laden" ones must go, whatever be their rank or condition. Kings in their palaces and paupers in the workhouse, are all on a level in this matter. All alike must come to Christ, if they feel soul-weary and athirst. All must drink of the same fountain, if they would have their thirst relieved.

You may not believe what I am now writing. Time will show who is right, and who is wrong. Go on, if you will, imagining that true happiness is to be found in the good things of this world. Seek it, if you will, in reveling and banqueting, in dancing and merry-making, in races and theaters, in sports and cards. Seek it if you will, in reading and scientific pursuits, in music and painting, in politics and business. Seek it—but you will never overtake it, unless you change your plan. Real heart-rest is never to be found except in heart-union with Jesus Christ.

The Princess Elizabeth, daughter of Charles I, lies buried in Newport church, in the Isle of Wight. A marble monument, erected by our gracious Queen Victoria, records in a touching way the manner of her death. She languished in Carisbrook Castle during the unhappy Commonwealth wars, a prisoner, alone, and separate from all the companions of her youth, until death set her free. She was found dead one day with her head leaning on her Bible, and the Bible open at the words, "Come unto Me, all you who labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." The monument in Newport church records this fact. It consists of a female figure reclining her head on a marble book, with the text already quoted engraved on the book. Think what a sermon in stone that monument preaches. Think, what a standing memorial it affords of the utter inability of rank and high birth to confer certain happiness! Think what a testimony it bears to the lesson before you this day—the mighty lesson that there is no true rest for anyone excepting in Christ! Happy will it be for your soul if that lesson is never forgotten!

(3) Does any reader of this paper desire to possess the rest that Christ alone can give, and yet feel afraid to seek it? I beseech you, as a friend to your soul, to cast this needless fear away. For what did Christ die on the cross, if not to save sinners? For what does He sit at the right hand of God, if not to receive and intercede for sinners? When Christ invites you so plainly, and promises so freely, why should you rob your own soul, and refuse to come to Him?

Who, among all the readers of this paper, desires to be saved by Christ, and yet is not saved at present? Come, I beseech you—come to Christ without delay. Though you have been a great sinner, Come! Though you have long resisted warnings, counsels, sermons, Come! Though you have sinned against light and knowledge, against a father's advice and a mother's tears, Come! Though you have plunged into every excess of wickedness, and lived without prayer, yet Come! The door is not shut, the fountain is not yet closed. Jesus Christ invites you. It is enough that you feel laboring and heavy-laden, and desire to be saved. Come! Come to Christ without delay!

Come to Him by faith, and pour out your heart before Him in prayer. Tell Him the whole story of your life, and ask Him to receive you. Cry to Him as the penitent thief did, when he saw Him on the cross. Say to Him, "Lord, save me also! Lord, remember me!" Come! Come to Christ without delay!

If you have never come to this point yet, you must come to it at last, if you mean to be saved. You must apply to Christ as a sinner; you must have personal dealings with the great Physician, and apply to Him for a cure. Why not do it at once? Why not this very day

accept the great invitation? Once more, I repeat my exhortation. Come! Come to Christ without delay!

(4) Has any reader of this paper found the rest which Christ gives? Have you tasted true peace by coming to Him and casting your soul on Him? Then go on to the end of your days as you have begun, looking to Jesus and living on Him. Go on drawing daily full supplies of rest, peace, mercy, and grace from the great fountain of rest and peace. Remember that, if you live to the age of Methuselah, you will never be anything but a poor empty sinner, owing all you have and hope for, to Christ alone.

Never be ashamed of living the life of faith in Christ. People may ridicule and mock you, and even silence you in argument; but they can never take from you the feelings which faith in Christ gives. They can never prevent you feeling, "I was weary until I found Christ—but now I have rest of conscience. I was blind—but now I see. I was dead—but I am alive again. I was lost—but I am found."

Invite all around you to come to Christ. Use every lawful effort to bring father, mother, husband, wife, children, brothers, sisters, friends, relatives, companions, fellow-workmen, servants—to bring all and everyone to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus. Spare no pains. Speak to them about Christ—speak to Christ about them. Be instant in season, out of season. Say to them, as Moses did to Hobab, "Come you with us, and we will do you good." (Num. 10:29.) The more you work for the souls of others, the more blessing will you get for your own soul.

Last—but not least, look forward with confidence to a better rest in a world to come. Yet a little time, and He who shall come, will come, and will not tarry. He will gather together all who have believed in Him, and take His people to a home where the wicked shall cease from troubling, and the weary shall be at perfect rest. He shall give them a glorious body, in which they shall serve Him without distraction, and praise Him without weariness. He shall wipe away tears from all faces, and make all things new. (Isa, 25:8.)

There is a good time coming for all who have come to Christ and committed their souls into His keeping. They shall "remember all the way by which they have been led," and see the wisdom of every step in the way. They shall wonder that they ever doubted the kindness and love of their Shepherd. Above all, they shall wonder that they could live so long without Him, and that when they heard of Him they could hesitate about coming to Him.

There is a pass in Scotland called Glencoe, which supplies a beautiful illustration of what heaven will be to the man who comes to Christ. The road through Glencoe carries the traveler up a long and steep ascent, with many a little winding and many a little turn in its course. But when the top of the pass is reached, a stone is seen by the wayside, with these simple words engraved on it, "Rest, and be thankful." Those words describe the feelings with which everyone who comes to Christ will at length enter heaven. The summit of the narrow way will be won. We shall cease from our weary journeying, and sit down in the kingdom of God. We shall look back over all the way of life with thankfulness, and see the perfect wisdom of every little winding and turn in the steep ascent by which we were led. We shall forget the toils of the upward journey in the glorious rest. Here in this world our sense of rest in Christ at best is feeble and partial—but, "when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." (1 Cor. 13:10.) Thanks be unto God—a day is coming when believers shall rest perfectly, and be thankful.

THE TEN VIRGINS

by J. C. Ryle

"Then the Kingdom of Heaven will be like **ten virgins**, who took their lamps, and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. Those who were foolish, when they took their lamps, took no oil with them, but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. Now while the bridegroom delayed, they all slumbered and slept. But at midnight there was a cry, 'Behold! The bridegroom is coming! Come out to meet him!' Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. The foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' But the wise answered, saying, 'What if there isn't enough for us and you? You go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.' While they went away to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was shut. Afterward the other virgins also came, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open to us.' But he answered, 'Most certainly I tell you, I don't know you.' Watch therefore, for you don't know the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.' " (Matthew 25:1-13)

This is one of the most solemn parables that the Lord Jesus ever spoke: partly because of the time at which it was spoken; partly because of the matter which it contains.

As to the *time*, it was but a few days before our Lord's death. It was spoken within view of Gethsemane and Calvary, the cross and the grave.

As to the *matter*, it stands as a beacon to the Church in all ages. It is a witness against carelessness and slothfulness, against apathy and indifference, and a witness of no uncertain sound. It cries to sinners, "Awake," and it cries to saints "Watch."

Now, I must necessarily pass over many points that might be spoken of in handling this parable. I have no time to follow out many trains of thought which it opens up. I stand here not to make a book—but to preach a single sermon; and, this being the case, I shall keep to those points which it most concerns you and I to know.

The marriage customs of the country where the parable was spoken *call for a word of explanation*. Marriages generally took place there in the evening. The bridegroom and his friends came in procession to the bride's house after nightfall. The young women who were the bride's friends were assembled at the bride's house to wait for them. As soon as the lamps or torches of the bridegroom's party were seen in the distance, these young women lighted their lamps and went forth to meet him; then, having formed one united party, they all returned together to the bride's house. As soon as they entered it, the door was shut, and the marriage ceremony took place;

and after that no one was admitted. All these were familiar things to those who heard the Lord Jesus, and it is right and proper that you should understand them.

The **figures** used in the parable also call for a word of explanation. I give you my own view of their meaning. I may be wrong—but you have a right to know what I think, and I will tell you shortly—but decidedly—I have no time to do more.

I believe the TIME spoken of in this parable means the time when Christ shall return in person to the world. The word "then" compared with the end of the twenty-fourth chapter appears to me to settle the question.

I believe the virgins carrying lamps represent professing Christians, the visible Church of Christ.

I believe the bridegroom represents the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

I take the wise virgins to be the true believers, the converted part of the visible Church.

I take the foolish virgins to be the mere nominal Christians—the unconverted.

I take the oil, which some had and others had not, to be the grace of the Spirit, the unction of the Holy One.

I consider the midnight cry to mean the second coming of Christ into the world.

I consider the going in to the marriage of the wise to mean the reward of the believers.

I consider the shutting out of the foolish to mean the final exclusion from heaven of the unbelieving.

And now, without saying anything more of preface, let me go on to point out the great **practical lessons** which this parable is meant to teach.

I. Learn first, that the visible Church of Christ will always be a mixed body until Christ comes again.

II. Learn secondly, that this visible church is always in danger of neglecting the doctrine of Christ's second coming.

III. Learn thirdly, that whenever Christ does come again, it will be a very sudden event.

IV. Learn fourthly, that Christ's second coming will make an immense change to all members of Christ's Church, both good and bad.

Let me try to set each of these truths before you.

I. The Church of Christ will always be a mixed body until Christ comes again.

I can gather no other meaning from the beginning of the parable. I see wise and foolish virgins mingled in one company—virgins with oil and virgins with no oil all side by side. And I see this state of things going on until the very moment the bridegroom appears. I see all this, and I cannot avoid the conclusion that the visible Church will always be a mixed body until Jesus comes again. Its members will never be all unbelievers; Christ will always have His witnesses. **Its members will never be all believers; there will always be imperfection, hypocrisy, and false profession.**

I frankly say that I can find no standing ground for the common notion that the Church will gradually advance towards perfection, and that it will become better and better, holier and holier up to the very end. I see no warrant of Scripture for believing that sin will gradually dwindle away in the earth, consume, melt and disappear by inches, like the last snowdrift in spring; nor yet for believing that holiness will gradually increase like the banyan tree, blossom, bloom, and fill the face of the world with fruit.

I have no doubt whatever that true gospel religion admits of ebbs and flows in its progress, of springs and of winters; and that, like the moon, Christ's bride is sometimes full and walking in brightness, and like the same moon is sometimes under an eclipse and scarcely seen at all. That there will always be a vast amount of evil in the world until the second coming, I am fully persuaded. Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. The tares and the wheat shall grow together until the harvest. I fully expect that the earth will one day be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord—but I believe that day will be in an entirely new dispensation—will not be until after the Lord's return. Until the Bridegroom comes there will always be wise and foolish in the Church.

The wise are those who have that wisdom which the Holy Spirit alone can give. They know their sins, they know Christ, they know how to walk and please God, and they act upon their knowledge. They look on life as a season of preparation for eternity, not as an end but as a way, not as a harbor but a voyage, not as a home but a journey, not as full age but a school. Happy are those who know this!

The foolish are those who are without spiritual knowledge. They neither know God, nor Christ, nor their own hearts, nor sin, nor the world, nor heaven, nor hell, as they ought. There is no folly like soul-folly. To expect wages after no work—or prosperity after no pains—or learning after no diligent reading—all this is folly. But to expect heaven without faith in Christ—or the kingdom of God without being born again—or the crown without the cross—all this is greater folly and yet more common.

Until the Bridegroom comes there will always be some in the visible Church who have grace—and some who have no grace. Some will have nothing but the name of Christian—others will have the reality. Some will have the profession of religion—others will have the possession also. Some will be content to belong to the church—others will never be content unless they also belong to Christ. Some will be satisfied if they have only the baptism of water—others will never be satisfied unless they also feel within the baptism of the Spirit. Some will stop short in the form of Christianity—others will never rest unless they have also the substance.

Brethren, the visible Church of Christ is made up of these two classes. There always have been such; there always will be such until the end. Borderers and undecided ones, whom man's eyes cannot make out, there must needs be. But gracious and graceless, wise and foolish, make up the whole Church of Christ. You are all written down in this parable yourselves. You are all either wise virgins—or

foolish . You have the oil of grace—or you have none. You are all either members of Christ—or not. You are all either traveling towards heaven—or towards hell.

See now how important it is that we ministers should divide our congregations in preaching to them. See how we ought to address you as an assembly in which some are converted and some unconverted, some are regenerate and some unregenerate, and some have grace and some have no grace at all. I know well that some do not like it; I know that some imagine that we should address you all as good Christian people. I for one will never do so, and I know not how any one can do it with the Bible in his hands.

There is a notion abroad that all have grace who have been baptized, and that all congregations of baptized people should be addressed as regenerate. I protest against such a notion as a dangerous contradiction of Scripture; I protest against it as calculated to confound the minds of people as to what real grace is. I protest against the idea of grace which nobody can see, of grace which a man may have in his heart and yet no one be aware of its existence. I know of no such grace in Scripture. Grace or no grace, oil or no oil, living or dead, having the Spirit or not having the Spirit—these are the only distinctions that I can find. These are the old paths, and in them I advise you to walk. Beware of false prophets! From ministers who do not draw a broad line between having the lamp of profession and having the oil of grace—may the good Lord ever deliver you!

II. Learn, secondly, that **the Church of Christ is always in danger of neglecting the doctrine of Christ's second personal coming.**

I draw that truth from the solemn words "While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept." I am quite aware that men explain that verse in different ways. I stand here to call no man master. I am set for the proclamation of that which I believe in my conscience to be true, and I cannot be bound by the opinion of others.

I do not believe that the words "they all slumbered and slept" mean the death of all; though many think so. To my mind such an interpretation involves a simple untruth. All the professing Church will not be dead when Christ comes. Paul says, "We who are alive remain (not 'all sleep') unto the coming of the Lord."

I do not believe that the words mean that all the professing Church got into a slumbering and sleeping state of soul, though many think so. Such a view appears to me to wipe away the distinction between believers and unbelievers far too much. Sleep is one of the emblems which the Spirit has chosen to signify unconversion. "Awake, you who sleeps," etc.

I believe that the words are to be explained with a special regard to the great event on which the whole parable chiefly runs—the second coming of Christ; and I believe that our Lord's meaning in this verse of the parable was simply this: that during the interval between His first and second coming the whole Church, both believers and unbelievers, would get into a dull and dim-sighted state of soul about the blessed doctrine of His own personal return.

And I say deliberately that, so far as my own judgment goes, there never was a saying of our Lord's more thoroughly verified by the event. I say that, **of all doctrines of the gospel, the one in which we are most unlike the first Christians in our sense of its true value is the doctrine of Christ's second coming**. In our view of man's corruption, of justification by faith, of our need of the sanctifying Spirit, upon these matters I believe we would find that English Christians were much of one mind with believers at Corinth, Ephesus, Philippi—or Rome in olden times—but in our view of the second coming I believe we would find there was a mighty difference if we could but compare our experience. We would find that we fell wofully short of them in our estimate of its importance and realization of its nature. We would discover, in one word, that we slumber and sleep about it.

I must speak my mind on this subject, now that I am upon it. I do so at the risk of giving offence and rubbing against prejudices. But speak I must.

I submit, then, that the Church of Christ has gone too long not seeing that there are two personal comings of Christ spoken of in the Old Testament—a coming in humiliation and an coming in glory too; a coming to suffer and a coming to reign. We have got into a wicked way of taking all the promises spiritually—and all the curses and denunciations literally. The curses on Jews and Babylon and Edom and Egypt we have been content to take literally; the blessings on Zion, Jerusalem, Jacob, Israel, and so forth, we have taken spiritually and comfortably applied to the Church of Christ. No man can read sermons or commentaries and not be aware of this. I believe it has been a wrong system of interpreting Scripture. I believe that prophetical denunciations and prophetical promises in their primary sense are always to be taken literally. That *primary* sense we have sadly lost sight of, and by so doing I think we have got into a slumbering and sleeping state about the second coming of Christ.

But I say further, that the Church of Christ has gone on too long putting a strange sense on the passage which speaks of the coming of the Son of man in the New Testament. Some tell us that this expression always means death. No man can read the thousands of epitaphs on tombstones in which the Son of man's coming is thrust in, and not observe how widespread this view is. Some tell us it means the conversion of the world. Some tell us it means the destruction of Jerusalem. That also is a very common way of interpreting the expression with many. They find Jerusalem everywhere in the New Testament prophecies, and, like Aaron's rod, they make it swallow up everything else. Now, I have no desire to underrate the importance of death, the conversion of the world, or the destruction of Jerusalem—but I must express my own firm belief that the coming of the Son of man is an entirely distinct subject from any of the three I have mentioned. And the acceptance they have met with I hold to be one more proof that in the matter of Christ's second coming the Church has slumbered and slept.

The plain truth of Scripture, I believe, is as follows. When the number of the elect is accomplished, Christ shall come again to this world, with power and great glory. As He came the first time in person, so He shall come the second time in person; as He went away visibly, so He shall return visibly. Then shall be fulfilled those words of Acts 1: "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen Him go into heaven"; and the words of Zechariah 14: "The Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with You"; and the words of Enoch in Jude: "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousand of His saints." **And the grand shortcoming of the Church in these days has been and is this: that we ministers do not preach enough about this second coming, and private believers do not think enough about it.** There are a few—but what are they? Many do not. We none of us live on it, feed on it, act on it, work from it, take comfort in it, as God intended us to do. In short, the Bridegroom

tarries, and we all slumber and sleep.

It proves nothing against the true doctrine that it has sometimes been fearfully abused. I would like to know what doctrine has not. Salvation by grace has been made a pretext for licentiousness; election an excuse for all manner of unclean living; and justification by faith a warrant for antinomianism. But if men will draw wrong conclusions, we are not obliged to throw out good principles. We do not give up the gospel because of the extravagancies of Saltmarsh and William Huntington, of Jumpers and Shakers; and we need not give up the second coming because of the Irvingites and wild enthusiasts of our own time.

Nor yet does it prove anything against the doctrine that it is attended with many difficulties. I do not think there are half so many difficulties as those connected with the first coming, and yet those difficulties were all overcome. I am satisfied there are far more difficulties upon any other system of interpretation, whatever it may be. And after all, what have we to do with the "how" and "in what manner" prophecies are to be fulfilled? Our only question is, "Has God said a thing?" If He has, no doubt it will be done.

For myself, I can only give my individual testimony—but the little I know experimentally of the doctrine makes me regard it as most practical and precious, and makes me long to see it more generally received.

I find it a powerful spring to holy living; a motive for patience, for moderation, for spiritual-mindedness; a test for employment of time, "would I like my Lord to find me so doing?"

I find it the strongest argument for missionary work. The time is short. The Lord is at hand. The gathering out from all nations of a witnessing people will soon be accomplished, and then the King shall come.

I find it the best answer to infidels. I tell them it proves nothing that all the world is not holy after eighteen hundred years; that it was never said it would be in the present order of things; that the King will come one day and then make all bow before Him.

I find it the best argument with the Jew. If I do not take all the prophecy of Isaiah literally, I know not how I can persuade him that the fifty-third chapter is fulfilled. But if I do, I have a resting-place for my lever which he cannot shake.

Who is there that cannot yet receive the doctrine of Christ's second personal coming? I invite you to consider the subject calmly. Dismiss from your mind traditional interpretation; separate the doctrine from the mistakes and blunders of many who have held it; do not reject the foundation because of the wood, hay and stubble which men build upon it; do not condemn it because of injudicious friends. Only examine the texts which speak of it in the same calm way that you weigh texts in the Romish and Socinian controversy, and I am hopeful as to the result on your mind.

Who is there here that receives the doctrine? Try to realize it more. Alas! how little do we feel it at the very best! Be gentle in argument with those that differ. Remember that a man may be mistaken on this subject and yet be a holy child of God. It is not mistake on this subject that ruins souls—but the lack of grace. Above all, avoid dogmatism and intolerance, and specially about symbolical prophecy. It is a sad truth—but a truth never to be forgotten, that none have injured the doctrine of the second coming so much as over-zealous friends.

III. Learn, thirdly, that **whenever Christ does come again, it will be a very sudden event.** I draw that from the verse in the parable: "At midnight there was a cry made, Behold the Bridegroom comes, go forth to meet Him!"

I do not know when Christ will come. I am no prophet, though I love the subject of prophecy. I dislike date-fixing, and I think it has done great harm. I only assert positively that Christ will come again one day in person to set up His kingdom, and that whether the day be near—or whether it be far off, it will take the Church and world exceedingly by surprise.

It will come on men suddenly. It will break on the world all at once. It will not have been talked over, prepared for and looked forward to by everybody. It will awaken men's minds like a cry of fire at midnight. It will startle men's hearts like a trumpet blown by their bedsides in their first sleep. Like Pharaoh and his army, men will know nothing until the very waters are upon them. Before they can recover their breath and know where they are—they shall find that the Lord has come.

I suspect there is a vague notion floating in men's minds that the present order of things will not end quite so suddenly. I suspect men cling to the idea that there will be a time when all will know the Lord's day is near, a time when all will be able to cleanse their consciences, look up their best garment, shake off their earthly business, and prepare to meet the Lord. If anyone here has got such a notion I charge him to give it up forever. If anything is clear in unfulfilled prophecy, this one fact seems clear, that the Lord's coming will be sudden, and take men by surprise; and any view of prophecy which destroys the possibility of its being a sudden event, appears to carry about with it a fatal defect.

Everything which is written in Scripture on this point confirms the truth that Christ's second coming will be sudden. "As a snare shall it come on the face of all those who dwell on the earth," says one place. "As a thief in the night," says another. "As the lightning," says a third. "In an hour when no man thinks," says a fourth. "At a time when they shall be saying Peace and safety," says a fifth.

Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself uses two most striking comparisons when dwelling on this point. He says in one, that as it was in the days of Lot, so shall it be in the days when the Son of man is revealed. Do you remember how it was? In the days when Lot went out of Sodom the men of Sodom were eating and drinking, planting and building, marrying and giving in marriage. The sun rose as usual. They thought of nothing but worldly things; they saw no sign of danger. But all at once the fire of God fell upon them and destroyed them!

He says in another place, "As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man." Do you remember how it was in the days of Noah? Stay a little, and let me remind you.

When the flood came on the earth there was no appearance beforehand of anything so awful being near. The sun rose and set as usual; the day and night followed each other in regular succession. The grass and trees and crops were growing; the business of the world was going on; and though Noah preached continually and warned men of coming danger, no one believed him.

But at last one day the rain began and did not cease; the waters ran and did not stop. The flood came and the flood swelled; the flood went on and covered one thing after another, and all were drowned who were not in the ark. Everything in which was the breath of life perished.

Now, as the flood took the world by surprise, just so will the coming of the Son of man. It will come on men like a thunderclap. In the midst of the world's business, when everything is going on just as usual, in such an hour as this the Lord Jesus Christ will return.

See here what solemn thoughts that the Lord Jesus Christ's return, should raise in every mind. Think for a moment how little prepared the world is for such an event. Look at the towns and cities of the earth, and think of them. Mark how absorbed are men in the business of their callings. Banks, shops, law, medicine, commerce, railways, banquets, balls, theaters—all and each are drinking up hearts and souls, and thrusting out the things of God. Think what a fearful shock would be the stoppage of all these things—the sudden stoppage which will be in the day of Christ's appearing. Yet one day it shall be.

Look at the rural parishes of such a land as ours, and think of them. See how the minds of the majority are buried in farms and allotments, in cattle and corn, in rent and wages, in digging and sowing, in buying and selling; and then imagine the awful effect of a sudden cessation of all these things—the final cessation which must be when Christ comes again to finish all things. Yet remember one day it shall be. Picture these things to your mind's eye; picture your own home, your own family, your own fireside—picture, above all, your own feelings, your own state of mind. And then remember that this is the end to which the world is hastening; this is the way in which the world's affairs will be wound up. This is an event which might possibly happen in your own time; and surely you cannot avoid the conclusion that this second coming of Christ is no mere curious speculation—but is of vast importance to your soul.

Ah! some will say, I have no doubt: "This is all mere cant and nonsense. This is all extravagant fanaticism. Where is the likelihood, where is the probability of all this?"

Do not say so. Men said the same in the day of Noah and Lot—but they found to their cost that Noah and Lot were right. Do not say so. The apostle Peter foretold that men would talk so in the latter days. Do not fulfill his prophecy by your unbelief.

Where is the cant and fanaticism of that which I have been saying? I calmly say the present state of things will come to an end one day. Will any one deny that? Will any one say we are to go on as we do now forever? I calmly say that Christ's coming will be the ending of the present state of things. I have said so because the Bible says it. I have calmly said that Christ's coming will be a sudden event, whenever it may be, and might possibly be in our own time. I have said so because thus and thus I find it written. If you do not like it, I am sorry for it. One thing only you must remember: you are finding fault with the Bible, not with me.

IV. Learn, in the last place, that **Christ's coming will make an immense change to all members of Christ's Church, both good and bad.**

I draw that from the concluding portion of the parable, from the discovery of the foolish virgins, that their lamps were gone out, from their anxious address to the wise, "Give us some of your oil," from their vain knocking at the door when shut, crying, "Lord, Lord, open to us," from the happy admission of the wise who were ready to the marriage supper, in company with the bridegroom. All these points are food for thought. But I have no time to dwell on them particularly. I can only take one single broad view of all. To all who have been baptized in the name of Christ—converted or unconverted, believer or unbeliever, holy or unholy, godly or ungodly, wise or foolish, gracious or graceless—to all, the second coming of Christ shall be an immense change.

It shall be ***an immense change to the UNGODLY***, to the mere nominal Christian.

They will see the value of real heart-religion if they never saw it before;, "Give us some of your oil," they will cry to the godly, "for our lamps have gone out."

Who does not know that spiritual religion never brings a man the world's praise? It never has done, and it never does. It entails the world's condemnation, the world's persecution, the world's ridicule, the world's sneers. The world will let a man go to hell quietly, and never try to stop him. The world will never let a man go to heaven quietly—they will do all they can to turn him back. Who has not heard of nicknames in plenty bestowed on all who faithfully follow Christ?—Pietist, Methodist, saint, fanatic, enthusiast, righteous zealot, and many more? Who does not know the petty family persecution which often goes on in private society in our own day. Let a young person go to every ball and theater and race-course, and utterly neglect his soul, and no one interferes; no one says "Spare yourself," no one says "Be moderate—remember your soul."

But let him begin to read his Bible and be diligent in prayers, let him decline worldly amusement and be particular in his employment of time, let him seek an evangelical ministry and live as if he had an immortal soul—let him do this, and the probability is all his relations and friends will be up in arms. "You are going too far!" "You need not be so very holy!" "You are taking up extreme lines!"—this is the least that he will hear. Alas that it should be so—but so it is.

These are ancient things. As it was in the days of Cain and Abel, as it was in the days of Isaac and Ishmael—even so it is now. Those who are born after the flesh will persecute those who are born after the Spirit. The cross of Christ will always bring reproach with it. If a man will become a decided evangelical Christian, he must make up his mind to lose the world's favors; he must be content to be thought by many a total fool.

But, brethren, all this will be at an end when Christ returns. The light of that day will show everything in its true colors; the scales will fall from the poor worldling's eyes. The value of the soul will flash on his astonished mind; the utter uselessness of a mere nominal Christianity will burst upon him like a thunderstorm. The blessedness of regeneration and faith in Christ and a holy walk, will shine before him in reality. The veil will fall from his face; he will discover that the godly have been the wise, and that he has played the fool exceedingly; and just as Saul wanted Samuel when it was too late, and Belshazzar sent for Daniel when the kingdom was departing from him—so will the ungodly turn to the very men they once mocked and despised, and cry, "Give us some of your oil, for our lamps have gone out!"

But again: the ungodly will seek salvation earnestly when Christ returns—but not find it. They will find that opportunities once let slip

shall never be regained. They will seek the oil of grace, they will knock at the door for admission, they will cry, "Lord, Lord, open to us," but all in vain.

Who does not know that thousands are urged to pray now, who never attempt it? They mean to do so one day, perhaps; they imagine it will never be too late to seek the Lord.

But there is a time coming when prayer shall be heard no longer. There is a time when the door by which Saul of Tarsus and Magdalen entered in, shall be shut forever. There is a time when men shall know the folly of sin—but, like Judas, too late for repentance; when they shall desire to enter into the promised land—but, like Israel at Kadesh, not be able; when they shall see the value of God's favor and covenant blessing—but like Esau, when they can no longer procure it; when they shall believe every jot and tittle of God's revealed word—but, like the miserable devils, only to tremble!

Yes! beloved brethren, many will come to this in the day of Christ's reappearing. They will ask and not receive, they will seek and not find, they will knock and the door shall not be opened to them. Alas, indeed, that it should be so! Woe to the man who puts off seeking his manna until the Lord's day of return! Like Israel of old, he will find none. Woe to the man who goes to buy oil when he ought to be burning it! Like the foolish virgins, he will find himself shut out from the marriage supper of the Lamb.

But as Christ's coming will be a mighty change to the ungodly, so also will it be a ***mighty change to the GODLY***.

They shall be placed in a position of perfect safety. "The door shall be shut." They shall no longer be vexed by temptations, persecuted by the world, warred against by the devil. Their conflicts shall all be over. Their strife with the flesh shall forever cease. They shall be where there is no Satan, no world, and no sin. Ah! brethren, the second Eden shall be better far than the first. In the first Eden the door was not shut—but in the second the Lord shall shut us in.

Furthermore the godly shall be placed in a position of perfect blessedness. They shall go in with the Bridegroom to the marriage; they shall be with Christ. Faith shall be swallowed up in sight, hope shall become certainty, knowledge shall at length be perfect, prayer shall be turned into praise, desires shall receive their full accomplishment, fears and doubtings shall not rise to mar their comforts, the thought of parting shall not spoil the pleasure of meeting; the company of saints shall be enjoyed without hurry and distraction, and weariness shall be all unknown. Thus shall they understand the meaning of the text, "In Your presence is fullness of joy, and at Your right hand are pleasures for evermore!" Then shall they experience the truth of that beautiful hymn which says:

"Let me be with You where You art,
My Savior, My eternal rest;
Then only shall this longing heart
Be fully and forever blessed.

"Let me be with You where You art,
Your unveiled glory to behold;
Then only will this wandering heart
Cease to be false to You and cold.

"Let me be with You where You art,
Where none can die, where none remove,
Then neither death nor life shall part
Me from Your presence and Your love."

Is there a single man or woman here that can laugh at true vital piety? Is there anyone who persecutes and ridicules true godliness, and talks of people being over-particular and righteous overmuch? Beware what you are doing! Again I say beware. You may live to think differently; you may live to alter your opinion—but perhaps too late. Ah! there is a day coming when there will be no infidels—no, not one! "Before the name of Jesus every knee will bow, and every tongue confess that He is Lord." Remember that day, and beware.

Is there any dear child of God here who is mocked and despised for the gospel's sake, and feels as if he stood alone? Take comfort; be patient: wait a little—your turn shall come. When the spies returned from searching Canaan, men talked of stoning Caleb and Joshua. A few days passed away, and all the assembly confessed that they alone had been right. Strive to be like them. Follow the Lord fully, and sooner or later all men shall confess that you did well. Men seem to be afraid of going too far, men seem to be afraid of being too holy. Millions will lament in the day of Christ's return that they had not religion enough; not one will be heard to say that he had too much.

And now, brethren, it only remains for me to close this sermon by *three words of **APPLICATION***, which seem to me to arise naturally out of the parable of which I have been speaking. I heartily pray God to bless them to your souls, and to make them words in season at the beginning of a new year.

1. My first word of application shall be a **QUESTION**. I take the parable of the ten virgins in my hands, and I address that question to everybody here present. I ask, "Are you ready?" Remember the words of the Lord Jesus: "those who were ready went in with the bridegroom to the marriage"—those who were ready and none else. Now here, in the sight of God, I ask you everyone, "Is this your case? Are you ready?"

I do not ask whether you are a Churchman and make a profession of religion; I do not ask whether you sit under an evangelical ministry, and like evangelical people, and can talk of evangelical things. All this is the surface of Christianity, and may be easily attained. I want to search your heart more deeply by far. I want to know whether grace is in your heart, and the Holy Spirit. I want to know whether you are ready to meet the Bridegroom, ready for Christ's return. I want to know, if the Lord should come this week, whether you could lift up your head with joy, and say, "This is our God! We have waited for Him! Let us be glad and rejoice in His salvation!"

Ah! some will be saying, "This is far too high a standard. This is requiring far too much. This is extravagance. This is a hard saying: who can bear it?" I cannot help it. I believe it is the standard of the Bible; I believe it is the standard Peter sets before us when he tells us to be "looking for and earnestly desiring the coming of the day of God"; I believe it is the mark at which every believer should be continually aiming, to be found ready to meet Christ.

I want no man to become a hermit and cease to do his duty in the world; I call on no one to leave his lawful calling or neglect his earthly affairs. But I do call on everyone to live like one who expects Christ to return, to live like a pilgrim and stranger, to live ever looking unto Jesus and leaning on Jesus, to live like a good servant with his loins girded and his lamp burning, to live like one whose treasure is in heaven and best things yet to come, with his heart packed up and ready to be gone. Now, is this too much to ask? I say decidedly that it is not.

Now, are you ready in this way? If not, I would like to know what good your religion does you. A religion that does not make a man ready for anything is a religion that may well be looked on with suspicion. If your religion does not make you ready, its source is not derived from the Bible.

2. My second word of application shall be an **INVITATION**. I address it to everyone who feels in his conscience that he has no grace in his heart—to everyone who feels that the character of the foolish virgin is his own. To all such I give an invitation this day: I invite you to *"awake."*

You know, many of you, that your hearts are not right in the sight of God. In the broadest, fullest sense you are asleep—not merely asleep about the doctrine of Christ's second coming—but asleep about everything that concerns your souls. You are wide-awake perhaps about temporal things; you read the newspapers, it may be, and have your head stored with earthly wisdom and useful knowledge. But you have no heart-felt sense of sin, no peace and friendship with God, no experimental acquaintance with Christ, no delight in the Bible and prayer; and what is all this but being asleep?

How long is this to go on? When do you mean to arise and live as if you had a soul? When will you cease to hear as those who hear not? When will you give up running after shadows and seek something substantial? When will you throw up the mockery of a religion that cannot satisfy, cannot comfort, cannot sanctify, cannot save, and will not bear a calm honest examination? When will you give up having a faith which does not influence your practice—having a book which you say is God's word—but do not use—having the name of Christian—but knowing nothing of Christ? Oh! when shall it once be?

Why not this very new year? Why not this very night? Why not awake and call upon your God, and resolve that you will sleep no longer? I set before you an open door. I set before you Jesus the Savior who died for sinners on the cross, Jesus able to save to the uttermost, Jesus willing to receive. Go to Him first and foremost if you would know what step to take. Go to Him in prayer and cry, "Lord, save me or I perish! I am weary of sleeping—I desire to sleep no longer." Oh! "awake you who sleep, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light."

Sun and moon and stars are all witnessing against you; they fill their place in creation, and you do not. Sabbaths and ordinances are witnessing against you: they are all proclaiming there is a God, there is a judgment, and you are living as if there were none. The tears and prayers of godly relations are witnessing against you: others are sorrowfully thinking you have a soul, though you seem to forget it. The very gravestones you walk past this night are witnessing against you; they are silently whispering, "Life is short and death is near," all, all are saying, "Awake! awake! awake! "Oh, brethren, the time past may surely suffice you to have slept. Awake to be wise, awake to be safe, awake to be happy. Awake, and sleep no more!

3. My last word of application shall be an **EXHORTATION** to all who have the oil of grace in their hearts. I draw it from the words of our Lord at the end of the parable. I exhort you to "watch!"

I exhort you to watch against everything which might interfere with a readiness for Christ's appearing. Watch against inconsistencies of walk, watch against besetting sins, watch against the harm of false doctrine, watch against formality in the use of spiritual things, watch against slothfulness about the Bible and private prayer. Backsliding begins from within. Watch against bitterness and uncharitableness: a little love weighs more than many gifts. Watch against pride and self-conceit: Peter said, "Though all men deny You, yet will not I"; and presently fell. Watch against the sin of Galatia, Ephesus, and Laodicea: believers may run well for a season, then lose their first love, and then become lukewarm. Watch against the sin of Jehu: a man may have great zeal from false motives. It is a much easier thing to oppose antichrist—than to follow Christ.

Brethren, believers, let us all watch, and watch more every year we live.

Let us watch for the *world's sake*. We are the book they chiefly read; they watch our ways. Oh! let us strive to be plain and holy epistles of Christ.

Let us watch for *our own sakes*. As our walk is, so will be our peace; as our conformity to Christ's mind, so will be our sense of Christ's atoning blood. If a man will not walk in the full light of the sun, how can he expect to be warm?

And, not least, let us watch for *our Lord's sake*. Let us live as if His honor was concerned in our behavior; let us live as if every slip and fall was a wound to our Head. Oh! let us exercise a godly jealousy for thought, word, and action—motive, manner, and walk. Never never let us fear being too strict. "My Father is glorified by this—that you produce much fruit and prove to be My disciples."

ARE YOU BORN AGAIN?

by J.C. Ryle

This is one of the most important questions in religion. Jesus Christ says, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of

God"-John 3:3.

Are you born again? It is not enough to reply, "I belong to the church; and I suppose I am." Thousands of nominal Christians have none of the marks and signs of being born again which the Scripture has given us.

Would you like to know the marks and signs of being born again? Give me your attention, and I will show them to you out of the first epistle of John.

First of all, John says, "Whoever is born of God does not commit sin;" and again, "Whoever is born of God sins not."-I John 3:9; 5:18. A man born again, or regenerate, does not commit sin as a habit. He no longer sins with his heart and will and whole inclination, as an unregenerate man does. There was probably a time when he did not think whether his actions were sinful or not, and never felt grieved after doing evil. There was no quarrel between him and sin; they were friends. Now he hates sin, flees from it, fights against it, counts it his greatest plague, groans under the burden of its presence, mourns when he falls under its influence, and longs to be delivered from it altogether. In one word, sin no longer pleases him, nor is even a matter of indifference; it has become the abominable thing which he hates. He cannot prevent its dwelling within him. If he said he had no sin, there would be no truth in him (I John 1:8). But he can say that he cordially abhors it, and the great desire of his soul is not to commit sin at all. He cannot prevent bad thoughts arising within him, and short-comings, omissions, and defects appearing, both in his words and actions. He knew, as James says that "In many things we offend all" (James 3:2). But he can say truly, and as in the sight of God, that things are a daily grief and sorrow to him, and that his whole nature does not consent unto them.

I place this mark before you. What would the Apostle say about you? Are you born again?

Secondly, John says, "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God"-I John 5:1.

A man born again, or regenerate, then, believes that Jesus Christ is the only Savior by whom his soul can be pardoned; that He is the divine person appointed by God the Father for this very purpose, and that beside Him there is no Savior at all. In himself he sees nothing but unworthiness, but in Christ he sees ground for the fullest confidence, and trusting in Him he believes that his sins are all forgiven. He believes that for the sake of Christ's finished work and death upon the cross, he is reckoned righteous in God's sight, and may look forward to death and judgment without alarm. He may have his fears and doubts. He may sometimes tell you he feels as if he had not faith at all. But ask him whether he will rest his hopes of eternal life on his own goodness, his own amendments, his prayers, his minister, or his church, and see what he will reply. Ask him whether he will give up Christ, and place his confidence in any other way of religion. Depend upon it, he would say that though he does feel weak and bad, he would not give up Christ for all the world. Depend upon it, he would say he found preciousness in Christ, a suitableness to his own soul in Christ, that he found nowhere else, and that he must cling to him.

I place this mark before you. What would the Apostle say about you? Are you born again?

Thirdly, John says, "Every one that does righteousness is born of Him"-I John 2:29.

The man born again, or regenerate, then is, a holy man. He endeavors to live according to God's will, to do the things that please God, to avoid the things that God hates. His aim and desire is to love God with heart and soul and mind and strength, and to love his neighbor as himself. His wish is to be continually looking to Christ as his example as well as his Savior, and to show himself Christ's friend by doing whatever Christ commands. No doubt he is not perfect. None will tell you that sooner than himself. He groans under the burden of indwelling corruption cleaving to him. He finds an evil principle within him constantly warring against Grace, and trying to draw him away from God. But he does not consent to it, though he cannot prevent its presence. In spite of all shortcomings, the average bent and bias of his way is holy-his doings are holy, his tastes holy, and his habits holy. In spite of all this swerving and turning aside, like a ship beating up against a contrary wind, the general course of his life is in one direction-toward God and for God. And though he may sometimes fell so low that he questions whether he is a Christian at all, he will generally be able to say with old John Newton, "I am not what I ought to be, I am not what I want to be. I am not what I hope to be in another world, but still I am not what I once used to be, and by the Grace of God I am what I am."

I place this mark also before you. What would the Apostle say about you? Are you born again?

Fourthly, John says, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren"-I John 3:14.

A man born again, or regenerate, then, has a special love for all true disciples of Christ. Like his Father in heaven, he loves all men with a great general love, but he has a special love for those who are of one mind with himself. Like his Lord and Savior, he loves the worst of sinners, and could weep over them; but he has a peculiar love for those who are believers. He is never so much at home as when he is in their company. He is never so happy as when he is among the saints and the excellent of the earth. Others may value learning, or cleverness, or agreeableness, or riches or rank, in the society they choose. The regenerate man values Grace. Those who have most Grace, and are most like Christ, are those he most loves. He feels that they are members of the same family with himself. He feels that they are his fellow-soldiers, warring against the same enemy. He feels that they are his fellow-travelers, journeying along the same road. He understands them, and they understand him. He and they may be very different in many ways-in rank, in station, in wealth. What matter? They are Jesus Christ's people. They are his Father's sons and daughters. Then he cannot help loving them.

I place this mark also before you. What would the Apostle say about you? Are you born again?

Fifthly, John says, "Whatever is born of God overcomes the world"-I John 5:4.

A man born again, or regenerate, does not make the world's opinion his rule of right and wrong. He does not mind going against the stream of the world's way, notions and customs. "What man will say?" is no longer a turning-point with him. He overcomes the love

of the world. He finds no pleasure in things which most around him call happiness. He cannot enjoy their enjoyments: they weary him: they appear to him vain, unprofitable, and unworthy of an immortal being. He overcomes the fear of the world. He is content to do many things which all around him think unnecessary, to say the least. They blame him: it does not move him. They ridicule him: he does not give way. He loves the praise of God more than the praise of men. He fears offending Him more than giving offense to man. He has counted the cost. It is a small thing with him no whether he is blamed or praised. He is no longer the servant of fashion and custom. To please the world is quite a secondary consideration with him. His first aim is to please God.

I place this mark also before you. What would the Apostle say about you? Are you born again?

Sixthly, John says, "He that is begotten of God keeps himself"-I John 5:18.

A man born again, or regenerate, is very careful of his own soul. He endeavors not only to keep clear of sin, but also to keep clear of everything which may lead to it. He is careful about the company he keeps. He feels that evil communications corrupt the heart, and that evil is for more catching than good, just as disease is more infectious than health. He is careful about the employment of his time: his chief desire about it is to spend it profitably. He is careful about the friendships he forms: it is not enough for him that people are kind and amiable and good-natured; all this is very well; but will they do good to his soul? He is careful over his own daily habits and behavior: he tries to recollect that his own heart is deceitful, the world full of wickedness, and the devil always laboring to do him harm; and, therefore, he would sincerely be always on his guard. He desires to live like a solider in an enemy's country, to wear his armor continually, and to be prepared for temptation. He finds by experience that his soul is ever among enemies, and he studies to be watchful, humble, and prayerful man.

I place this mark also before you. What would the Apostle say about you? Are you born again?

Such are the six great marks of being born again. Let every one who has gone so far with me, read them over with attention, and lay them to heart.

I know there is a vast difference in the depth and distinctness of these marks in different people. In some they are faint, dim, feeble, and hardly to be discerned. In others they are bold, sharp, clear, plain, and unmistakable, so that any one may read them. Some of these marks are more visible in some, and others are more visible in others. It seldom happens that all are equally manifest in one and the same soul. All this I am quite ready to allow.

But still after every allowance, here we find boldly painted six marks of being born of God. Here is an inspired Apostle writing one of the last general epistles to the Church of Christ, telling us that a man born of God, Does not commit sin, Believes that Jesus is the Christ, Does righteousness, Loves the brethren, Overcomes the world, and Keeps himself. I ask the reader to observe all this.

Now what shall we say to these things? What they can say who hold that regeneration is only an admission to outward church privileges, I am sure I do not know. For myself I say boldly, I can only come to one conclusion. That conclusion is, that only those people are born again who have these six marks about them; and that all men and women who have not these marks, are not born again. And I firmly believe that this is the conclusion to which the Apostle wished us to come.

Reader, have you these marks? Are you born again?

FIRE FIRE!

by J. C. Ryle

When a house is on fire, what ought to be done first? We ought to give the alarm and wake the inhabitants. This is true love to our neighbor. this is true charity. Reader, I love your soul, and want it to be saved. I am therefore going to tell you something about hell. There is such a place as hell. Let no one deceive you with vain words. What men do not like, they try hard not to believe. When the Lord Jesus Christ comes to judge the world, he will punish all who are not his disciples with a fearful punishment. All who are found impenitent and unbelieving; all who have clung to sin, stuck to the world, and set their affections on things below; all who are without Christ; all such shall come to an awful end. Whoever is not written in the book of life shall be "cast into the lake of fire." Rev 20:15.

The punishment of hell shall be most severe. There is no pain like that of burning. Put your finger in the candle for a moment if you doubt this, and try. Fire is the most destructive and devouring of all elements. Look into the mouth of a blast furnace, and think what it would be to be there. Fire is of all elements most opposed to life. Creatures can live in air, and earth, and water; but nothing can live in fire. Yet fire is the portion to which the Christless and unbelieving will come. they will be "cast into the lake of fire." The punishment of hell will be eternal. Millions of ages will pass away, and the fire will never burn low and become dim. The fuel of that fire will never waste away and be consumed. it is "unquenchable fire." O reader, these are the sad and painful things to speak of. I have no-pleasure in dwelling on them. I could rather say with the apostle Paul, "I have great sorrow." But they are things written for our learning, and it is good to consider them. They are part of that Scripture which is all profitable, and they ought to be heard. Painful as the subject of hell is, it is one about which I dare not, cannot, and must not be silent.

Who would desire to speak of hell-fire if God has not spoken of it? When God has spoken of it so plainly, who can safely hold his peace? I dare not shut my eyes to the fact, that a deep rooted infidelity lurks in men's minds on the subject of hell. I see it oozing out in the utter apathy of some: they eat, and drink, and sleep, as if there was no wrath to come. I see it creeping forth in the coldness others about their neighbors's souls: they show little anxiety to awaken the unconverted, and pluck brands from the fire. I desire to denounce such infidelity with all my might. Believing that there are "terrors of the Lord," as well as the "recompense of reward."

I call on all who profess to believe the Bible, to be on their guard. I know that some do not believe there is any hell at all. They think it impossible there can be such a place. They call it inconsistent with the mercy of God. They say it is too awful an idea to be really true. The devil of course, rejoices in the views of such people. They help his kingdom mightily. They are preaching up his old favorite doctrine, "You shall not surely die." I know furthermore, that some do not believe that hell is eternal. They tell us it is incredible that a compassionate God will punish men forever. He will surely open the prison doors at last. This also is a mighty help to the devil's cause. "Take your ease, "he whispers to sinners-" if you do make a mistake, never mind, it is not forever." I know also that some believe there is a hell, but never allow that anybody is going there. All people with them are good, as soon as they die, all were sincere, all meant well, and all, they hope, got to heaven. Alas! what a common delusion is this! I can well understand the feeling of the little girl who asked her mother where all the wicked people were buried, for she found no mention on the gravestones of any except of the good.

And I know very well that some believe there is a hell, but never like to hear it spoken of. It is a subject that should always be kept back, in their opinion. They see no profit in bringing it forward, and are rather shocked when it is mentioned. This also is an immense help to the devil. "Hush! hush!" says Satan, "say nothing about hell." The fowler wishes no noise to be made when he has laid his, snares. The wolf wold like the shepherd to sleep, while he prowls round the fold. The devil rejoices when Christians are silent about hell. reader, all these notions are the opinions of man. What is it to you and me what man thinks of religion? Man will not judge us at the last day. There is but one point to be settled, "what says the word of God?" do you believe the Bible? Then depend upon it, hell is real and true. it is a true as heaven, as true as justification by faith, as true as the fact that Christ died upon the cross. There is not a fact or doctrine which you may not lawfully doubt, if you doubt hell. Disbelieve hell, you unscrew, unsettle, and unpin everything in the Scripture. You may as well throw your Bible aside at once. From "no hell" to "no God" is but a series of steps. Do you believe the Bible? Then depend upon it, hell will have inhabitants. The wicked shall certainly be turned into hell, and all the people that forget God. The same blessed Savior who now sits on a throne of grace, will one day sit on a throne of judgement, and men will see there is such a thing as "the wrath of the Lamb." The same, lips which now say, Come, come unto me," will one day say, "Depart, you cursed" Alas! how awful the thought of being condemned by Christ himself, judge by the Savior, sentenced to misery by the lamb! Do you believe the Bible? Then depend upon it, hell will be intense and inalterable woe.

It is vain to talk of all the expressions about it being figures of speech, the pit, the prison, the worm, the fire, the thirst, the blackness, the darkness, the weeping, the gnashing of teeth, the second death, all these may be figures of speech if you please. But Bible figures mean something beyond all questions, and here they mean something which man's mind can never fully conceive. O reader, the miseries of mind and conscience are far worse than those of the body. The whole extent of hell, the present suffering, the bitter recollection of the past, the hopeless prospect of the future, will never be thoroughly known except by those who go there.

Do you believe the Bible? Then depend upon it, hell is eternal. It must be eternal, or words have no meaning at all. "Forever and ever," "everlasting," "unquenchable," "never-dying" all these are expressions used about hell, and expressions that cannot be explained away. It must be eternal, or the very foundations of heaven are cast down. If hell has an end, heaven has an end too. They both stand or fall together. It must be eternal, or every doctrine of the gospel is undermined. If a man may escape hell at length without faith in Christ, or sanctification of the Spirit, sin is no longer an infinite evil, and there was no such great need of Christ's making an atonement. And where is the warrant for saying that hell can ever change a heart, or make it fit for heaven? It must be eternal, or hell would cease to be hell altogether. Give a man hope, and he will bear any thing. Grant a hope of deliverance, however distant, and hell is but a drop of water.

Alas! for that day which will have no tomorrow - that day when men shall seek death and not find it, and shall desire to die but death shall flee from them! Do you believe the Bible? Then depend upon it, hell is a subject that ought not to be kept back. It is striking, to observe that none say so much about it as our Lord Jesus Christ, that gracious and merciful Savior, and the apostle John, whose heart seems full of love. Truly it may well be doubted whether we ministers speak of it as much as we ought. I cannot forget the words of a dying hearer of Mr. Newton: "Sir, you often told me of Christ and salvation: why did you not remind me of hell and danger?" Let others hold their peace about hell if they will; I dare not do so. I see it plainly in Scripture, and I must speak of it. I fear that thousands are on the broad, way that leads to it, and I would sincerely arouse them to a sense of the peril before them.

What would you say of the man who saw his neighbor's house in danger of being burned down, and never raised the cry of "fire?" What ought to be said of us as ministers if we call ourselves watchmen for souls, and yet see fires of hell raging in distance, and never give the alarm?

Call it bad taste, if you like, to speak of hell. Call it charity to make things pleasant, and speak of smoothly, and soothe men with constant lullaby of peace. I have not read my Bible. My notion of charity is to warn men plainly of danger. My notion of taste in the ministerial office, is to declare all the counsel of God.

If I never spoke of hell, I should think I had kept back something that was profitable, and should look on myself as an accomplice of the devil. Reader, I beseech you, in all tender affection, beware of false views of the subject on which I have been dwelling. Beware of new and strange doctrines about hell and the eternity of punishment. Beware of manufacturing a God of your own: a God who is all mercy, but not just; a God who is all love, but not holy; a God who as a heaven for every body, but a hell for none; a God who can allow good and bad to be side by side in time, but will make no distinction between good and broad in eternity. Such a God is an idol of your won, as truly an idol as any snake or crocodile in an Egyptian temple. The hands of your won fancy and sentimentality have made him. He is not the God of the Bible, and beside the God of the Bible there is no God at all.

Your heaven would be no heaven at all. A heaven containing all sorts of characters indiscriminately would be miserable discord indeed. Alas! for the eternity of such a heaven. There would be little difference between it and hell. Ah! reader, there is a hell! There is a fire! Take heed lest you find it out to your cost too late. Beware of being wise above that which is written. Beware of forming fanciful theories of your own, and then trying to make the Bible square with them. Beware of making selections from your Bible to suit your taste. Dare not to say, "I believe this verse, for I like it. I refuse that, for I cannot reconcile it with my views." No! but, O man, who are you that replies against God? By what right do you talk in this way? Surely it were better to say, over every chapter in the word,

"Speak, Lord, for your servant hears." Ah! if men would do this, they would never deny the unquenchable fire.

THOUGHTS ON IMMORTALITY

by J. C. Ryle, April 19, 1883

"The things which are seen are temporary; but the things which are not seen are eternal." —2 Corinthians 4:18

A subject stands out on the face of this text, which is one of the most solemn and heart-searching in the Bible. That subject is **eternity**, or **immortality**.

The subject is one of which the wisest man can only take in a little. We have no eyes to see it fully, no line to fathom it, no mind to grasp it; and yet we must not refuse to consider it. There are star-depths in the heavens above us which the most powerful telescope cannot pierce; yet it is well to look into them and learn something, if we cannot learn everything. There are heights and depths about the subject of eternity which mortal man can never comprehend; but God has spoken of it, and we have no right to turn away from it altogether.

The subject is one which we must never approach without the Bible in our hands. The moment we depart from "God's written Word," in considering eternity and the future state of man, we are likely to fall into error. In examining points like these we have nothing to do with preconceived notions as to what is God's character, and what *we think* God ought to be, or ought to do with man after death. We have only to find out what is written. "What says the Scripture? What says the Lord?" It is wild work to tell us that we ought to have "noble thoughts about God," independent of, and over and above, Scripture. Natural religion soon comes to a standstill here. The noblest thoughts about God which we have a right to hold are the thoughts which He has been pleased to reveal to us in His "written Word."

I ask the attention of all into whose hands this sermon may fall, while I offer a few suggestive thoughts about eternity. As a mortal man I feel deeply my own insufficiency to handle this subject. But I pray that God the Holy Spirit, whose strength is made perfect in weakness, may bless the words I have written, and make them seeds of eternal life in many minds.

1. We live in a world where all things are temporary and passing away.

That man must be blind indeed who cannot realize this. Everything around us is decaying, dying, and coming to an end. There is a sense, no doubt, in which "matter" is eternal. Once created, it will never entirely perish. But in a popular practical sense, there is nothing undying about us except our souls. No wonder the poet says—
"Change and decay in all around I see,
O You that change not, abide with me!"

We are all "going, going, going," whether high or low, gentle or simple, rich or poor, old or young. We are all going, and shall soon be "gone."

Beauty is only temporary. Sarah was once the fairest of women, and the admiration of the Court of Egypt; yet a day came when even Abraham, her husband, said, "Let me bury my dead out of sight." (Gen. 23:4.) **Strength** of body is only temporary. David was once a mighty man of valor, the slayer of the lion and the bear, and the champion of Israel against Goliath; yet a day came when even David had to be nursed and ministered to in his old age like a child. **Wisdom** and vitality of brain are only temporary. Solomon was once a prodigy of knowledge, and all the kings of the earth came to hear his wisdom; yet even Solomon in his latter days played the fool exceedingly, and allowed his wives to turn away his heart.

Humbling and painful as these truths may sound, it is good for us to realize them and lay them to heart. The houses we live in, the homes we love, the riches we accumulate, the professions we follow, the plans we form, the relations we enter into, they are only for a time. "The things seen are temporary." "The fashion of this world passes away." (1 Cor. 7:31.)

The thought is one which ought to rouse every one who is living only for this world. If his conscience is not utterly seared, it should stir in him great searchings of heart. Oh, take care what you are doing! Awake to see things in their true light before it be too late. The things you live for now are all temporary and passing away. The pleasures, the amusements, the recreations, the merry-makings, the profits, the earthly callings, which now absorb all your heart and drink up all your mind, will soon be over. They are poor ephemeral things which cannot last. Oh, do not love them not too well; do not grasp them too tightly; do not make them your idols! You cannot keep them, and you must leave them. Seek first the kingdom of God, and then everything else shall be added to you. "Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth." Oh, you that love the world, be wise in time! Never, never forget that it is written, "The world passes away, and the lust thereof; but he who does the will of God abides forever." (Col. 3:2; 1 John 2:17.)

The same thought ought to cheer and comfort every true Christian. Your trials, crosses, and conflicts are all temporary. They will soon have an end; and even now they are working for you "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." (2 Cor. 4:17.) Take them patiently; bear them quietly; look upward, forward, onward, and far beyond them. Fight your daily fight under an abiding conviction that it is only for a little time, and that rest is not far off. Carry your daily cross with an abiding recollection that it is one of the "things seen" which are temporary. The cross shall soon be exchanged for a crown, and you shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of God.

2. We are all going towards a world where everything is eternal.

That great unseen state of existence which lies behind the grave, is forever. Whether it be happy or miserable, whether it be a condition of joy or sorrow, in one respect it is utterly unlike this world—it is forever. *There,* at any rate, will be no change and decay, no end, no good-bye, no mornings and evenings, no alteration, no annihilation. Whatever there is beyond the tomb, when the last

trumpet has sounded, and the dead are raised, will be endless, everlasting, and eternal. "The things unseen are eternal."

We cannot fully realize this condition. The contrast between now and then, between this world and the next, is so enormously great that our feeble minds will not take it in. The consequences it entails are so tremendous, that they almost take away our breath, and we shrink from looking at them. But when the Bible speaks plainly we have no right to turn away from a subject, and with the Bible in our hands we shall do well to look at the "things which are eternal."

(*a*) Let us settle it, then, in our minds, for one thing, that the *future happiness* of those who are saved is eternal. However little we may understand it, it is something which will have no end—it will never cease, never grow old, never decay, never die. At God's "right hand are pleasures for evermore." (Ps. 16:11.) Once landed in paradise, the saints of God shall go out no more. Their inheritance is "incorruptible, undefiled, and fades not away." They shall "receive a crown of glory that fades not away." (1 Pet. 1:4; 5:4.) Their warfare is accomplished; their fight is over; their work is done. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more. They are traveling on towards an "eternal weight of glory," towards a home which shall never be broken up, a meeting without a parting, a family gathering without a separation, a day without night. Faith shall be swallowed up in sight, and hope in certainty. They shall see as they have been seen, and know as they have been known, and "be forever with the Lord." I do not wonder that the Apostle Paul adds, "Comfort one another with these words." (1 Thess. 4:17, 18.)

(*b*) Let us settle it, for another thing, in our minds, that the *future misery* of those who are finally lost is eternal. This is a dreadful truth, I am aware, and flesh and blood naturally shrink from the contemplation of it. But I am one of those who believe it to be plainly revealed in Scripture, and I dare not keep it back in the pulpit. To my eyes eternal future happiness and eternal future misery appear to stand side by side. I fail to see how you can distinguish the duration of one from the duration of the other. If the joy of the believer is forever, the sorrow of the unbeliever is also forever. If Heaven is eternal, so likewise is hell. It may be my ignorance, but I know not how the conclusion can be avoided.

I cannot reconcile the non-eternity of punishment with the *language of the Bible*. Its advocates talk loudly about love and charity, and say that it does not harmonize with the merciful and compassionate character of God. But what says the Scripture? Who ever spoke such loving and merciful words as our Lord Jesus Christ? Yet His are the lips which three times over describe the consequence of impenitence and sin, as "the worm that never dies and the fire that is not quenched." He is the Person who speaks in one sentence of the wicked going away into "everlasting punishment" and the righteous into "life eternal." (Mark 9:43-48; Matt. 25:46.) Who does not remember the Apostle Paul's words about charity? Yet he is the very Apostle who says, the wicked "shall be punished with everlasting destruction." (2 Thess. 1:9.) Who does not know the spirit of love which runs through all John's Gospel and Epistles? Yet the beloved Apostle is the very writer in the New Testament who dwells most strongly, in the book of Revelation, on the reality and eternity of future woe. What shall we say to these things? Shall we be wise above that which is written? Shall we admit the dangerous principle that words in Scripture do not mean what they appear to mean? Is it not far better to lay our hands on our mouths and say, "Whatever God has written must be true." "Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments." (Rev. 16:7.)

I cannot reconcile the non-eternity of punishment with the *language of our Prayer-book*. The very first petition in our matchless Litany contains this sentence, "From everlasting damnation, good Lord, deliver us." The Catechism teaches every child who learns it, that whenever we repeat the Lord's Prayer we desire our Heavenly Father to "keep us from our ghastly enemy and from everlasting death." Even in our Burial Service we pray at the grave side, "Deliver us not into the bitter pains of eternal death." Once more I ask, "What shall we say to these things?" Shall we teach our congregations that even when people live and die in sin we may hope for their happiness in a remote future? Surely the common sense of many of our worshipers would reply, that if this is the case Prayer-book words mean nothing at all.

I lay no claim to any 'special knowledge' of Scripture. I feel daily that I am no more infallible than the Pope of Rome. But I must speak according to the light which God has given to me; and I do not think I should do my duty if I did not raise a warning voice on this subject, and try to put Christians on their guard. Six thousand years ago sin entered into the world by the devil's daring falsehood —"You shall not surely die." (Gen. 3:4.) At the end of six thousand years the great enemy of mankind is still using his old weapon, and trying to persuade men that they may live and die in sin, and yet at some distant period may be finally saved. Let us not be ignorant of his devices. Let us walk steadily in the old paths. Let us hold fast the old truth, and believe that as the happiness of the saved is eternal, so also is the misery of the lost.

(*a*) Let us hold it fast in the *interest of the whole system of revealed religion*. What was the use of God's Son becoming incarnate, agonizing in Gethsemane, and dying on the cross to make atonement, if men can be finally saved without believing on Him? Where is the slightest proof that saving faith in Christ's blood can ever begin after death? Where is the need of the Holy Spirit, if sinners are at last to enter heaven without conversion and renewal of heart? Where can we find the smallest evidence that any one can be born again, and have a new heart, if he dies in an unregenerate state? If a man may escape eternal punishment at last, without faith in the blood of Christ or sanctification of the Spirit, sin is no longer an infinite evil, and there was no need for Christ making an atonement.

(*b*) Let us hold it fast *for the sake of holiness and morality*. I can imagine nothing so pleasant to flesh and blood as the specious theory that we may live in sin, and yet escape eternal perdition; and that although we "serve diverse lusts and pleasures" while we are here, we shall somehow or other all get to heaven hereafter! Only tell the young man who is "wasting his substance in riotous living," that there is heaven at last, or, at any rate, no eternal punishment, even for those who live and die in sin, and he is never likely to turn from evil. Why should he repent and take up the cross, if he can get to heaven at last, or escape punishment, without trouble?

(*c*) Finally, let us hold it fast, *for the sake of the common hopes of all God's saints*. Let us distinctly understand that every blow struck at the eternity of punishment is an equally heavy blow at the eternity of reward. It is impossible to separate the two things. No ingenious theological definition can divide them. They stand or fall together. The same language is used, the same figures of speech are employed, when the Bible speaks about either condition. Every attack on the duration of hell is also an attack on the duration of heaven. It is a deep and true saying, "With the sinner's fear our hope departs."

I turn from this part of my subject with a deep sense of its painfulness. I feel strongly with Robert M'Cheyne, that "it is a hard subject to handle lovingly." But I turn from it with an equally deep conviction that if we believe the Bible we must never give up anything which it contains. From hard, austere, and unmerciful theology, good Lord, deliver us! If men are not saved, it is because they "will

not come to Christ." (John 5:40.) But we must not be wise above that which is written. No morbid love of liberality, so called, must induce us to reject anything which God has revealed about eternity. Men sometimes talk exclusively about God's mercy and love and compassion, as if He had no other attributes, and leave out of sight entirely His holiness and His purity, His justice and His unchangeableness, and His hatred of sin. Let us beware of falling into this delusion. It is a growing evil in these latter days.

Low and inadequate views of the unutterable vileness and filthiness of sin, and of the unutterable purity of the eternal God, are prolific sources of error about man's future state. Let us think of the mighty Being with whom we have to do, as He Himself declared His character to Moses, saying, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, patience and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin." But let us not forget the solemn clause which concludes the sentence—"And *that will by no means clear the guilty."* (Exod. 34:6, 7.) **Unrepented sin is an eternal evil**, and can never cease to be sin; and He with whom we have to do is an eternal God.

The words of Psalm 145 are strikingly beautiful—"The Lord is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy. The Lord is good to all—and His tender mercies are over all His works. The Lord upholds all that fall, and raises up all those that be bowed down. The Lord is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works. The Lord is near unto all them that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him in truth. The Lord preserves all them that love Him." Nothing can exceed the mercifulness of this language! But what a striking fact it is that the passage goes on to add the following solemn conclusion, *"All the wicked will He destroy."* (Psalm 145:8-20.)

3. Our state in the unseen world of eternity depends entirely on what we are in time.

The life that we live upon earth is short at the very best, and soon gone. "We spend our days as a tale that is told." "What is our life? It is a vapor—so soon passes it away, and we are gone." (Psalm 90:9; James 4:14.) The life that is before us when we leave this world is an endless eternity, a sea without a bottom, and an ocean without a shore. "One day in Your sight," eternal God, "is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." (2 Pet. 3:8.) In that world time shall be no more. But short as our life is here, and endless as it will be hereafter, it is a tremendous thought that eternity hinges upon time. Our lot after death depends, humanly speaking, on what we are while we are alive. It is written, "God will give to each person according to what he has done. To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger." Romans 2:6-8

We ought never to forget that we are all, while we live, in a state of probation. We are constantly sowing seeds which will spring up and bear fruit, every day and hour in our lives. There are eternal consequences resulting from all our thoughts and words and actions, of which we take far too little account. "For every idle word that men speak they shall give account in the day of judgment." (Matt. 12:36.) Our thoughts are all numbered, our actions are weighed. No wonder that Paul says, "He who sows to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he who sows to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." (Gal. 6:8.) In a word, what we sow in life we shall reap after death, and reap to all eternity.

There is no greater delusion than the common idea that it is possible to live wickedly, and yet rise again gloriously; to be without religion in this world, and yet to be a saint in the next. When the famous Whitefield revived the doctrine of conversion last century, it is reported that one of his hearers came to him after a sermon and said—"It is all quite true, sir. I hope I shall be converted and born again one day, but not until after I am dead." I fear there are many like him. I fear the false doctrine of the Romish purgatory has many secret friends even within the pale of the Church of England! However carelessly men may go on while they live, they secretly cling to the hope that they shall be found among the saints when they die. They seem to hug the idea that there is some cleansing, purifying effect produced by death, and that, whatever they may be in this life, they shall be found "fit for the inheritance of the saints" in the life to come. But it is all a delusion.

"Life is the time to serve the Lord,
The time to insure the great reward."

The Bible teaches plainly, that as we die, whether converted or unconverted, whether believers or unbelievers, whether godly or ungodly, so shall we rise again when the last trumpet sounds. There is no repentance in the grave—there is no conversion after the last breath is drawn. Now is the time to believe on Christ, and to lay hold on eternal life. Now is the time to turn from darkness unto light, and to make our calling and election sure. The night comes when no man can work. As the tree falls, there it will lie. If we leave this world impenitent and unbelieving, we shall rise the same in the resurrection morning, and find it had been "good for us if we had never been born." (Mark 14:21.)

I charge every reader of this paper to remember this, and to make a good use of time. Regard it as the stuff of which life is made, and never waste it or throw it away. Your hours and days and weeks and months and years have all something to say to an eternal condition beyond the grave. What you sow in life that now is, you are sure to reap in a life to come. As holy Baxter says, it is "now or never." Whatever we do in religion must be done now.

Remember this in your use of all the means of grace, from the least to the greatest. Never be careless about them. They are given to be your helps toward an eternal world, and not one of them ought to be thoughtlessly treated or lightly and irreverently handled. Your daily prayers and Bible-reading, your weekly behavior on the Lord's day, your manner of going through public worship—all, all these things are important. Use them all as one who remembers eternity.

Remember it, not least, whenever you are tempted to do evil. When sinners entice you, and say, "It is only a little one,"—when Satan whispers in your heart, "Never mind—where is the mighty harm? Everybody does so,"—then look beyond time to a world unseen, and place in the face of the temptation the thought of eternity. There is a grand saying recorded of the martyred Reformer, Bishop Hooper, when one urged him to recant before he was burned, saying, "Life is sweet and death is bitter." "True," said the good bishop, "quite true! But eternal life is more sweet, and eternal death is more bitter."

4. The Lord Jesus Christ is the great Friend to whom we must look for help, both for time and eternity.

The purpose for which the eternal Son of God came into the world can never be declared too fully, or proclaimed too loudly. He came to give us hope and peace while we live among the "things seen, which are temporary," and glory and blessedness when we go into the

"things unseen, which are eternal." He came to "bring life and immortality to light," and to "deliver those who, through fear of death, were all their life-time subject to bondage." (2 Tim. 1:10; Heb.2:15.) He saw our lost and bankrupt condition, and had compassion on us. And now, blessed be His name, a mortal man may pass through things temporal with comfort, and look forward to things eternal without fear.

These mighty privileges our Lord Jesus Christ has purchased for us at the cost of His own precious blood. He became our Substitute, and bore our sins in His own body on the cross, and then rose again for our justification. He suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us unto God. He was made sin for us who knew no sin, that we poor sinful creatures might have pardon and justification while we live, and glory and blessedness when we die. (1 Pet. 2:24; 3:18; 2 Cor. 5:21.)

And all that our Lord Jesus Christ has purchased for us He offers freely to every one who will turn from his sins, come to Him, and believe. "I am the light of the world," He says—"he who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "If any man thirsts, let him come unto Me and drink." "Him that comes unto Me I will never cast out." And the terms are as simple as the offer is free—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." "Whoever believes on Him shall not perish but have eternal life." (John 8:12; Matt. 11:28; John 7:37; 6:37 Acts 16:31; John 3:16.)

He who has Christ, has life. He can look round him on the "temporary things," and see change and decay on every side without dismay. He has got treasure in heaven, which neither rust nor moth can corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal. He can look forward to the "things eternal," and feel calm and composed. His Savior has risen, and gone to prepare a place for him. When he leaves this world he shall have a crown of glory, and be forever with his Lord. He can look down even into the grave, as the wisest Greeks and Romans could never do, and say, "Oh, death, where is your sting? oh, grave, where is your victory? oh, eternity, where are your terrors?" (1 Cor. 15:55.)

Let us all settle it firmly in our minds that the only way to pass through "things seen" with comfort, and look forward to "things unseen" without fear, is to have Christ for our Savior and Friend, to lay hold on Christ by faith, to become one with Christ and Christ in us, and while we live in the flesh to live the life of faith in the Son of God. (Gal. 2:20.) How vast is the difference between the state of him who has faith in Christ, and the state of him who has none! Blessed indeed is that man or woman who can say, with truth, "I trust in Jesus—I believe." When Cardinal Beaufort lay upon his death-bed, our mighty poet, Shakespear, describes King Henry as saying, "He dies, but gives no sign." When John Knox, the Scotch Reformer, was drawing to his end, and unable to speak, a faithful servant asked him to give some proof that the Gospel he had preached in life gave him comfort in death, by raising his hand. He heard; and raised his hand toward heaven three times, and then departed. Blessed, I say again, is he who believes! He alone is rich, independent, and beyond the reach of harm. If you and I have no comfort amid temporary things, and no hope for the things eternal, the fault is all our own. It is because we "will not come to Christ, that we may have life." (John 5:40.)

I leave the subject of eternity here, and pray that God may bless it to many souls. You and I have looked each other in the face perhaps for the first time, and probably for the last time, in our lives. But when and where shall we meet again? Before we part, and perhaps forever, I offer a word of friendly exhortation. I offer to every one within these old Cathedral walls tonight some food for thought, and matter for self-examination.

(1) First of all, **how are you using your TIME?**Life is short and very uncertain. You never know what a day may bring forth. Business and pleasure, money-getting and money-spending, eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage—all, all will soon be over and done with forever. And you, what are you doing for your immortal soul? Are you wasting time, or turning it to good account? Are you preparing to meet God?

(2) Secondly, **where shall you be in eternity?**It is coming, coming, coming very fast upon us. You are going, going, going very fast into it. But where will you be? On the right hand or on the left in the day of judgment? Among the lost or among the saved? Oh, rest not, rest not until your soul is insured! Make sure work—leave nothing uncertain. It is a fearful thing to die unprepared, and fall into the hands of the living God.

(3) Thirdly, **would you be safe for time and eternity?**Then seek Christ, and believe in Him. Come to Him just as you are. Seek Him while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near. There is still a throne of grace. It is not too late. Christ waits to be gracious—He invites you to come to Him. Before the door is shut and the judgment begins, repent, believe, and be saved.

(4) Lastly, **would you be happy?**Cling to Christ, and live the life of faith in Him. Abide in Him, and live near to Him. Follow Him with heart and soul and mind and strength, and seek to know Him better every day. So doing you shall have great peace while you pass through "temporary things," and in the midst of a dying world shall "never die." (John 11:26.) So doing, you shall be able to look forward to "things eternal" with unfailing confidence, and to feel and "know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle be dissolved we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." (2 Cor. 5:1.)

Simplicity in Preaching

by J. C. Ryle

King Solomon says, in the book of Ecclesiastes**, "Of making many books there is no end"** (12:12). There are few subjects about which that saying is more true than that of preaching. The volumes which have been written in order to show ministers how to preach are enough to make a small library. In sending forth one more little treatise, I only propose to touch one branch of the subject. I do not pretend to consider what should be the substance and matter of a sermon. I purposely leave alone such points as "gravity, unction, liveliness, warmth," and the like, or the comparative merits of written or extemporaneous sermons. I wish to confine myself to one point, which receives far less attention than it deserves. That point is **simplicity in language and style**.

I ought to be able to tell my readers something about "simplicity," if experience will give any help. I began preaching forty-five years ago, when I first took orders in a poor rural parish, and a great portion of my ministerial life has been spent in preaching to laborers and farmers. I know the enormous difficulty of preaching to such hearers, of making them understand one's meaning, and securing their attention. So far as concerns language and composition, I deliberately say that I would rather preach before the University at Oxford or Cambridge, or the Temple, or Lincoln's Inn, or the Houses of Parliament, than I would address an agricultural congregation on a fine hot afternoon in the month of August. I have heard of a laborer who enjoyed Sunday more than any other day in the week, "Because," he said, "I sit comfortably in church, put up my legs, have nothing to think about, and just go to sleep." Some of my younger friends in the ministry may some day be called to preach to such congregations as I have had, and I shall be glad if they can profit by my experience.

Before entering on the subject, I wish to clear the way by making **four prefatory remarks**.

1. For one thing, I ask all my readers to remember that **to attain simplicity in preaching is of the utmost importance to every minister who wishes to be useful to souls**. Unless you are simple in your sermons you will never be understood, and unless you are understood you cannot do good to those who hear you. It was a true saying of Quintilian, "If you do not wish to be understood, you deserve to be neglected." Of course the first object of a minister should be to preach the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but "the truth as it is in Jesus." But the next thing he ought to aim at is, that his sermon may be understood; and it will not be understood by most of his hearers if it is not simple.

2. The next thing I will say, by way of prefatory remark, is, that **to attain simplicity in preaching is by no means an easy matter**. No greater mistake can be made than to suppose this. "To make hard things seem hard," to use the substance of a saying of Archbishop Usher's, "is within the reach of all, but to make hard things seem easy and intelligible is a height attained by very few speakers." One of the wisest and best of the Puritans said two hundred years ago, "that the greater part of preachers shoot over the heads of the people." This is true also in 1837! I fear a vast proportion of what we preach is not understood by our hearers any more than if it were Greek. When people hear a simple sermon, or read a simple tract, they are apt to say, "How true! how plain! how easy to understand!" and to suppose that any one can write in that style. Allow me to tell my readers that **it is an extremely difficult thing to write simple, clear, perspicuous, and forcible English**. Look at the sermons of Charles Bradley, of Clapham. A sermon of his reads most beautifully. It is so simple and natural, that anyone feels at once that the meaning is as clear as the sun at noonday. **Every word is the right word, and every word is in its right place.** Yet the labor those sermons cost Mr. Bradley was very great indeed. Those who have read Goldsmith's Vicar of Wakefield attentively, can hardly fail to have noticed the exquisite naturalness, ease, and simplicity of its language. And yet it is known that the pains and trouble and time bestowed upon that work were immense. Let the Vicar of Wakefield be compared with Johnson's Rasselas, which was written off in a few days, it is said, under higher pressure—and the difference is at once apparent. In fact, to use very long words, to seem very learned, to make people go away after a sermon saying, "How fine! how clever! how grand!" all this is very easy work. But to write what will strike and stick, to speak or to write that which at once pleases and is understood, and becomes assimilated with a hearer's mind and a thing never forgotten—that, we may depend upon it, is a very difficult thing and a very rare attainment.

3. Let me observe, in the next place, that when I talk of simplicity in preaching, **I would not have my readers suppose I mean childish preaching**. If we suppose the poor like that sort of sermon, we are greatly mistaken. If our hearers once imagine we consider them a parcel of ignorant folks for whom any kind of "infant's food" is good enough, our chance of doing good is lost altogether. People do not like even the appearance of 'condescending preaching'. They feel we are not treating them as equals, but inferiors. Human nature always dislikes that. They will at once put up their backs, stop their ears, and take offence—and then we might as well preach to the winds.

4. Finally, let me observe, that **it is not coarse or vulgar preaching that is needed**. It is quite possible to be simple, and yet to speak like a gentleman, and with the demeanor of a courteous and refined person. It is an utter mistake to imagine that uneducated and illiterate men and women prefer to be spoken to in an illiterate way, and by an uneducated person. To suppose that a lay-evangelist or Scripture-reader, who knows nothing of Latin or Greek, and is only familiar with his Bible, is more acceptable than an Oxford first-class man, or a Cambridge wrangler (if that first-class man knows how to preach), is a complete error. People only tolerate vulgarity and coarseness, as a rule, when they can get nothing else.

Having made these prefatory remarks in order to clear the way, I will now proceed to give my readers **five brief hints as to what seems to me the best method of attaining simplicity in preaching**.

1. My first hint is this—If you want to attain simplicity in preaching, **take care that you have a clear view of the subject upon which you are going to preach.** I ask your special attention to this. Of all the five hints I am about to give, this is the most important. Mind, then, when your text is chosen, that you understand it and see right through it; that you know precisely what you want to prove, what you want to teach, what you want to establish, and what you want people's minds to carry away. **If you yourself begin in a fog, you may depend upon it you will leave your people in darkness.** Cicero, one of the greatest ancient orators, said long ago, "No one can possibly speak clearly and eloquently about a subject which he does not understand"—and I am satisfied that he spoke the truth. Archbishop Whately was a very shrewd observer of human nature, and he said rightly of a vast number of preachers, that "they aimed at nothing, and they hit nothing. Like men landing on an unknown island, and setting out on a journey of exploration, they set out in ignorance, and traveled on in ignorance all the day long."

I ask all young ministers especially, to remember this first hint. I repeat most emphatically—"Take care you thoroughly understand your subject. Never choose a text of which you do not quite know what it means." Beware of taking obscure passages such as those which are to be found in unfulfilled and emblematic prophecies. If a man will continually preach to an ordinary congregation about the seals and vials and trumpets in Revelation, or about Ezekiel's temple, or about predestination, free will, and the eternal purposes of God—it will not be at all surprising to any reasonable mind if he fails to attain simplicity. I do not mean that these subjects ought not to be handled occasionally, at fit times, and before a suitable audience. All I say is, that **they are very deep subjects, about which wise Christians often disagree, and it is almost impossible to make them very simple**. We ought to see our subjects plainly, if we wish to make them simple, and there are hundreds of plain subjects to be found in God's Word.

Beware, for the same reason, of taking up what I call "fanciful subjects" and "**spiritualizing texts**"—and then dragging out of them meanings which the Holy Spirit never intended to put into them. There is no subject needful for the soul's health which is not to be found plainly taught and set forth in Scripture. This being the case, I think a preacher should never take a text and extract from it, as a dentist would a tooth from the jaw, something which, however true in itself, is not the plain literal meaning of the inspired words. The sermon may seem very glittering and ingenious, and his people may go away saying, "What a clever parson we have got!" But if, on examination, they can neither find the sermon in the text, nor the text in the sermon, their minds are perplexed, and they begin to think the Bible is a deep book which cannot be understood. If you want to attain simplicity, beware of spiritualizing texts.

When I speak of spiritualizing texts, let me explain what I mean. I remember hearing of a minister in a northern town, who was famous for preaching in this style. Once he gave out for his text, "He who is so impoverished that he has no oblation, chooses unto him a tree that will not rot" (Isa. 40:20). "Here," said he, "is man by nature impoverished and undone. He has nothing to offer, in order to make satisfaction for his soul. And what ought he to do? He ought to choose a tree which cannot rot—even the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

On another occasion, being anxious to preach on the doctrine of indwelling sin, he chose his text out of the history of Joseph and his brethren, and gave out the words, "The old man of whom you spoke, is he yet alive?" (Gen. 43:27). Out of this question he ingeniously twisted a discourse about the infection of nature remaining in the believer—a grand truth, no doubt, but certainly not the truth of the passage. Such instances will, I trust, be a warning to all my younger brethren. If you want to preach about the indwelling corruption of human nature, or about Christ crucified, you need not seek for such far-fetched texts as those I have named. If you want to be simple, **mind you choose plain simple texts!**

Furthermore, if you wish to see through your subjects thoroughly, and so to attain the foundation of simplicity, do not be ashamed of **dividing your sermons** and stating your divisions. I need hardly say this is a very vexed question. There is a morbid dread of "firstly, secondly, and thirdly" in many quarters. The stream of 'fashion' runs strongly against divisions, and I must frankly confess that a lively undivided sermon is much better than one divided in a dull, stupid, illogical way. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He who can preach sermons which strike and stick without divisions, by all means let him hold on his way and persevere. But let him not despise his neighbor who divides. All I say is—if we would be simple, there must be ORDER in a sermon as there is in an army. What wise general would mix up artillery, infantry, and cavalry in one confused mass in the day of battle? What giver of a banquet or dinner would dream of putting on the table the whole of the viands at once—the soup, the fish, the entrees, the meat, the salads, the sweets, the dessert, in one huge dish? Such a host would hardly be thought to serve his dinner well. Just so I say it is with sermons. By all means let there be **order**—order, whether you bring out your "firstly, secondly, or thirdly," or not—order, whether your divisions are concealed or expressed—order so carefully arranged that your points and ideas shall follow one another in beautiful regularity, like regiments marching past before the Queen on a review day in Windsor Park.

For my own part, I honestly confess that I do not think I have preached two sermons in my life without divisions. I find it of the utmost importance to make people understand, remember, and carry away what I say—and I am certain that divisions help me to do so. They are, in fact, like hooks and pegs and shelves in the mind. If you study the sermons of men who have been and are successful preachers, you will always find order, and often divisions, in their sermons. I am not a bit ashamed to say that I often read the sermons of Mr. **Spurgeon**. I like to gather hints about preaching from all quarters. David did not ask about the sword of Goliath —"Who made it? who polished it? what blacksmith forged it?" He said, "There is nothing like it"—for he had once used it to cut off its owner's head. Mr. Spurgeon can preach most ably, and he proves it by keeping his enormous congregation together. We ought always to examine and analyze sermons which draw people together. Now when you read Mr. Spurgeon's sermons, note how clearly and perspicuously he divides a sermon, and fills each division with beautiful and simple ideas. How easily you grasp his meaning! How thoroughly he brings before you certain great truths, that hang to you like hooks of steel, and which, once planted in your memory, you never forget!

My first point, then, if you would be simple in your preaching, is, that you must thoroughly understand your subject, and if you want to know whether you understand it, try to divide and arrange it. I can only say for myself; that I have done this ever since I have been a minister. For forty-five years I have kept note books in which I write down texts and heads of sermons for use when require. Whenever I get hold of a text, and see my way through it, I put it down and make a note of it. If I do not see my way through a text, I cannot preach on it, because I know I cannot be simple; and if I cannot be simple, I know I had better not preach at all

2. The second hint I would give is this—**Try to use in all your sermons, as far as you can—simple WORDS.** In saying this, however, I must explain myself. When I talk of simple words, I do not mean words of only one syllable, or words which are purely Saxon. I cannot in this matter agree with Archbishop Whately. I think he goes too far in his recommendation of Saxon, though there is much truth in what he says about it. I rather prefer the saying of that wise old heathen Cicero, when he said, that orators should try to use words which are "in daily common use" among the people. Whether the words are Saxon or not—or of two or three syllables. It does not matter so long as they are words commonly used and understood by the people. Only, whatever you do, beware of what the poor shrewdly call "dictionary" words, that is, of words which are abstract, or scientific, or pedantic, or complicated, or vague, or very long. They may seem very fine, and sound very grand, but they are rarely of any use. **The most powerful and forcible words, as a rule, are very short.**

Let me say one word more to confirm what I have stated about that common fallacy of the desirableness of always using Saxon English. I would remind you that a vast number of words of other than Saxon origin are used by writers of notorious simplicity. Take, for instance, the famous work of John Bunyan, and look at the very title of it—The Pilgrim's Progress. Neither of the leading words in that title is Saxon. Would he have improved matters if he had called it "The Wayfarer's Walk"? In saying this I admit freely that words of French and Latin origin are generally inferior to Saxon; and, as a rule, I would say—use strong pure Saxon words—if you can. All I mean to say is, that you must not think it a matter of course that words cannot be good and simple if they are not of Saxon origin. In any case, beware of long words.

Dr. Gee, in his excellent book, 'Our Sermons', very ably points out **the uselessness of using long words and expressions not in common use**. For example, he says, "Talk of happiness rather than of felicity; talk of almighty rather than omnipotent; forbidden rather than proscribed; hateful rather than noxious; afterwards rather than subsequently; call out and draw forth instead of evoke and educe." We all need to be pulled up sharply on these points. It is very well to use fine words at Oxford and Cambridge, before

classical hearers, and in preaching before educated audiences. But depend upon it, when you preach to ordinary congregations, the sooner you throw overboard this sort of English, and use plain common words, the better. One thing, at all events, is quite certain, **without simple words you will never attain simplicity in preaching**.

3. The third hint I would offer, if you wish to attain simplicity in preaching, is this—**Take care to aim at a SIMPLE style of composition.** I will try to illustrate what I mean. If you take up the sermons preached by that great and wonderful man Dr. Chalmers, you can hardly fail to see what an enormous number of lines you meet with without coming to a full stop. This I regard as a great mistake. It may suit Scotland, but it will never do for England. If you would attain a simple style of composition, beware of writing many lines without coming to a pause, and so **allowing the minds of your hearers to take breath**. Beware of colons and semicolons. Stick to commas and full stops, and take care to write as if you were asthmatic or short of breath. Never write or speak very long sentences or long paragraphs. Use stops frequently, and start again—and the oftener you do this, the more likely you are to attain a simple style of composition. Enormous sentences full of colons, semicolons, and parentheses, with paragraphs of two or three pages' length, are utterly fatal to simplicity. We should bear in mind that preachers have to do with hearers and not readers, and that what will "read" well will not always "speak" well. A reader of English can always help himself by looking back a few lines and refreshing his mind. A hearer of English hears once for all, and if he loses the thread of your sermon in a long involved sentence, he very likely never finds it again.

Again, simplicity in your style of composition depends very much upon **the proper use of proverbs and pointed sentences**. This is of vast importance. Here, I think, is the value of much that you find in Matthew Henry's commentary, and Bishop Hall's Contemplations. There are some good sayings of this sort in a book not known so well as it should be, called 'Papers on Preaching'. Take a few examples of what I mean: "What we weave in time—we wear in eternity." "Hell is paved with good intentions." "Sin forsaken, is one of the best evidences of sin forgiven." "It matters little how we die—but it matters much how we live." "Meddle with no man's person—but spare no man's sin." "The street is soon clean when every one sweeps before his own door." "Lying rides on debt's back—it is hard for an empty bag to stand upright." "He who begins with prayer—will end with praise" "All is not gold that glitters." "In religion, as in business—there are no gains without pains." "In the Bible there are shallows where a lamb can wade—and depths where an elephant must swim." "One thief on the cross was saved, that none should despair—and only one, that none should presume."

Proverbial, pointed, and antithetical sayings of this kind give wonderful perspicuousness and force to a sermon. Labor to store your minds with them. Use them judiciously, and especially at the end of paragraphs, and you will find them an immense help to the attainment of a simple style of composition. But of long, involved, complicated sentences—always beware!

4. The fourth hint I will give is this: **If you wish to preach simply—use a DIRECT style.** What do I mean by this? I mean the practice and custom of saying "I" and "you." When a man takes up this style of preaching, he is often told that he is conceited and egotistical. The result is that many preachers are never direct—and always think it very humble and modest and becoming to say "we." But I remember good Bishop Villiers saying that "we" was a word kings and corporations should use, and they alone—but that parish clergymen should always talk of "I" and "you." I endorse that saying with all my heart. I declare I never can understand what the famous pulpit "we" means. Does the preacher who all through his sermon keeps saying "we" mean himself and the bishop? or himself and the Church? or himself and the congregation? or himself and the early Fathers? or himself and the Reformers? or himself and all the wise men in the world? or, after all, does he only mean myself, plain "John Smith" or "Thomas Jones"? If he only means himself, what earthly reason can he give for using the plural number, and not saying simply and plainly "I"? When he visits his parishioners, or sits by a sick-bed, or catechizes his school, or orders bread at the baker's, or meat at the butcher's—he does not say "we," but "I." Why, then, I should like to know, can he not say "I" in the pulpit? What right has he, as a modest man, to speak for anyone but himself? Why not stand up on Sunday and say, "Reading in the Word of God, **I** have found a text containing such things as these, and I come to set them before you"?

Many people, I am sure, do not understand what the preacher's "we" means. The expression leaves them in a kind of fog. If you say, "**I**, the pastor of the parish, come here to talk of something that concerns your soul, something you should believe, something you should do"—you are at any rate understood. But if you begin to talk in the vague plural number of what" we" ought to do, many of your hearers do not know what you are driving at, and whether you are speaking to yourself or them. I charge and entreat my younger brethren in the ministry not to forget this point. **Do try to be as direct as possible.** Never mind what people say of you. In this particular do not imitate Chalmers, or Melville, or certain other living pulpit celebrities. Never say "we" when you mean "I." The more you get into the habit of talking plainly to the people, in the first person singular, as old Bishop Latimer did—the simpler will your sermon be, and the more easily understood. The glory of Whitefield's sermons is their directness. But unhappily they were so badly reported, that we cannot now appreciate them.

5. The fifth and last hint I wish to give you is this: **If you would attain simplicity in preaching, you must use plenty of anecdotes and illustrations.** You must regard illustrations as windows through which light is let in upon your subject. Upon this point a great deal might be said, but the limits of a small treatise oblige me to touch it very briefly. I need hardly remind you of the example of Him who "spoke as never any man spoke"—our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Study the four Gospels attentively, and mark what a wealth of illustrations His sermons generally contain. How often you find figure upon figure, parable upon parable, in His discourses! There was nothing under His eyes apparently from which He did not draw lessons. The birds of the air, and the fish in the sea, the sheep, the goats, the cornfield, the vineyard, the ploughman, the sower, the reaper, the fisherman, the shepherd, the vinedresser, the woman kneading meal, the flowers, the grass, the bank, the wedding feast, the sepulcher—all were made vehicles for conveying thoughts to the minds of hearers. What are such parables as the prodigal son, the good Samaritan, the ten virgins, the king who made a marriage for his son, the rich man and Lazarus, the laborers of the vineyard, and others—what are all these but **stirring stories** that our Lord tells in order to convey some great truth to the souls of His hearers? Try to walk in His footsteps and follow His example.

If you pause in your sermon, and say, "Now I will tell you a story"—I pledge that all who are not too fast asleep will pick up their ears and listen. People like similes, illustrations, and well-told stories—and will listen to them when they will attend to nothing else. And from what countless sources we can get illustrations! Take all the book of **nature** around us. Look at the sky above and the world beneath. Look at history. Look at all the branches of **science**, at geology, at botany, at chemistry, at astronomy. What is there in

heaven above or earth below from which you may not bring illustrations to throw light on the message of the gospel? Read Bishop Latimer's sermons, the most popular, perhaps, that were ever preached. Read the works of Brooks, and Watson, and Swinnock, the Puritans. How full they are of illustrations, figures, metaphors, and stories! Look at Mr. Moody's sermons. What is one secret of his popularity? He fills his sermons with pleasing stories. **He is the best speaker**, says an Arabian proverb, **who can turn the ear into an eye!**

For my part, I not only try to tell stories, but in country parishes I have sometimes put before people familiar **illustrations** which they can see. For instance—Do I want to show them that there must have been a first great cause or Being who made this world? I have sometimes taken out my watch, and have said, "Look at this watch. How well it is made! Do any of you suppose for a moment that all the screws, all the wheels, all the pins of that watch came together by accident? Would not any one say there must have been a watchmaker? And if so, it follows most surely that there must have been a Maker of the world, whose handiwork we see engraved on the face of every one of those glorious planets going their yearly rounds and keeping time to a single second. Look at the world in which you live, and the wonderful things which it contains. Will you tell me that there is no God, and that creation is the result of chance?" Or sometimes I have taken out a bunch of keys and shaken them. The whole congregation, when they hear the keys, look up. Then I say, "Would there be need of any keys if all men were perfect and honest? What does this bunch of keys show? Why, they show that the heart of man is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." **Illustration**, I confidently assert, is one of the best receipts for making a sermon simple, clear, perspicuous, and easily understood. Lay yourselves out for it. Pick up illustrations wherever you can. Keep your eyes open, and use them well. Happy is that preacher who has an eye for **similitudes**, and a memory stored with well-chosen stories and **illustrations**. If he is a real man of God, and knows how to deliver a sermon, he will never preach to bare walls and empty benches.

But I must add a word of caution. There is a proper way of telling stories. If a man cannot tell stories naturally—he had better **not** tell them at all. Illustration, again, after all I have said in its favor, may be carried too far. I remember a notable instance of this in the case of the great Welsh preacher, Christmas Evans. There is in print a sermon of his about the wonderful miracle that took place in Gadara, when devils took possession of the swine, and the whole herd ran down violently into the sea. He paints it so minutely that it really becomes ludicrous by reason of the words put in the mouth of the swine-herders who told their master of the loss he had sustained. "Oh! sir," says one, "the pigs have all gone!" "But," says the master, "where have they gone?" "They have run down into the sea." "But who drove them down?" "Oh! sir, that wonderful man." "Well, what sort of a man was he? What did he do?" "Why, sir, he came and talked such strange things, and the whole herd ran suddenly down the steep place into the sea." "What, the old black boar and all?" "Yes, sir, the old black boar has gone too; for as we looked round, we just saw the end of his tail going over the cliff." Now that is going to an extreme. So, again, Dr. Guthrie's admirable sermons are occasionally so overlaid with illustrations as to remind one of cake made almost entirely of plums and containing hardly any flour. Put plenty of color and picture into your sermon by all means. Draw sweetness and light from all sources and from all creatures—from the heavens and the earth, from history, from science. But after all there is a limit. You must be careful how you use color—lest you do as much harm as good. Do not put on color by **spoonfuls**, but with a **brush**. This caution remembered, you will find color an immense aid in the attainment of simplicity and perspicuousness in preaching.

And now bear in mind that my five points are these—

1. If you want to attain simplicity in preaching, you must **have a clear knowledge of what you are going to preach**.

2. If you would attain simplicity in preaching, you must **use simple words**.

3. If you would attain simplicity in preaching, you must **seek to acquire a simple style of composition**, with short sentences and as few colons and semicolons as possible.

4. If you would attain simplicity in preaching, **aim at directness**.

5. If you would attain simplicity in preaching, **make abundant use of illustration and anecdote**.

Let me add to all this one plain word of **APPLICATION**. You will never attain simplicity in preaching without **plenty of work**—pains and trouble, I say emphatically, pains and trouble. When Turner, the great painter, was asked by some one how it was he mixed his colors so well, and what it was that made them so different from those of other artists—"Mix them? mix them? mix them? Why, with brains, sir." I am persuaded that, in preaching, **little can be done except by trouble and by pains.**

I have heard that a young and careless clergyman once said to Richard Cecil, "I think I need more faith." "No," said the wise old man—"you need more work. You need more pains. You must not think that God will do work for you—though He is ready to do it by you." I entreat my younger brethren to remember this. I beg them to make time for their composition of sermons, to take trouble and to exercise their brains by reading. Only mind that you read what is useful.

I would not have you spend your time in reading the early church Fathers in order to help your preaching. They are very useful in their way, but there are many things more useful in modern writers, if you choose them discreetly.

Read good models, and become familiar with good specimens of simplicity in preaching. As your best model, take the English Bible. If you speak the language in which that is written, you will speak well. Read John Bunyan's immortal work, the Pilgrim's progress. Read it again and again, if you wish to attain simplicity in preaching. Do not be above reading the Puritans. Some of them no doubt are heavy. Goodwin and Owen are very heavy, though excellent artillery in position. Read such books as Baxter, and Watson, and Traill, and Flavel, and Charnock, and Hall, and Henry. They are, to my mind, models of the best simple English spoken in old times. Remember, however, that language alters with years. They spoke English, and so do we, but their style was different from ours. Read beside them the best models of modern English that you can get at. I believe the best English writer for the last hundred years was William Cobbett, the political Radical. I think he wrote the finest simple Saxon-English the world has ever seen. In the present day I do not know a greater master of tersely spoken Saxon-English than John Bright. Among old political orators, the speeches of Lord Chatham and Patrick Henry, the American, are models of good English. Last, but not least, never forget that, next to the Bible, there is nothing in the English language which, for combined simplicity, perspicuousness, eloquence, and power, can be compared with some of the great speeches in Shakespeare. Models of this sort must really be studied, and studied "with brains," too, if you wish to

attain a good style of composition in preaching. On the other hand, do not be above talking to the poor, and visiting your people from house to house. Sit down with your people by the fireside, and exchange thoughts with them on all subjects. Find out how they think and how they express themselves, if you want them to understand your sermons. By so doing you will insensibly learn much. You will be continually picking up modes of thought, and get notions as to what you should say in your pulpit.

A humble country clergyman was once asked "whether he studied the fathers." The worthy man replied, that he had little opportunity of studying the fathers, as they were generally out in the fields when he called. But he studied the mothers more, because he often found them at home—and he could talk to them.

Wittingly or unwittingly, the good man hit a nail right on the head. We must talk to our people when we are out of church—if we would understand how to preach to them in the church.

1. I will only say, in CONCLUSION, that whatever we preach, or whatever pulpit we occupy, whether we preach simply or not, whether we preach written or extempore, we ought to aim not merely at letting off fireworks, but at **preaching that which will do lasting good to souls!** Let us beware of fireworks in our preaching. "Beautiful" sermons, "brilliant" sermons, "clever" sermons, "popular" sermons, are often sermons which have no effect on the congregation, and do not draw men to Jesus Christ. Let us aim so to preach, that what we say may really come home to men's minds and consciences and hearts, and make them think and consider.

2. All the simplicity in the world can do no good, unless you **preach the simple gospel of Jesus Christ so fully and clearly that everybody can understand it.** If 'Christ crucified' has not His rightful place in your sermons, and 'sin' is not exposed as it should be, and your people are not plainly told what they ought to believe, and be, and do—**your preaching is of no use!**

3. All the simplicity in the world, again, is useless without **a good lively delivery**. If you bury your head in your bosom, and mumble over your manuscript in a dull, monotonous, droning way, like a bee in a bottle, so that people cannot understand what you are speaking about—your preaching will be in vain. Depend upon it, delivery is not sufficiently attended to in our Church. In this, as in everything else connected with the science of preaching, I consider the Church of England is sadly deficient. I know that I began preaching alone in the New Forest, and nobody ever told me what was right or wrong in the pulpit. The result was that the first year of my preaching was a series of experiments. We get no help in these matters at Oxford and Cambridge. The utter lack of any proper training for the pulpit is one great blot and defect in the system of the Church of England.

4. Above all, let us never forget that all the simplicity in the world is useless without **prayer for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit**, and the grant of God's blessing, and a life corresponding in some measure to what we preach. Be it ours to have an earnest desire for the souls of men, while we seek for simplicity in preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, and let us never forget to accompany our sermons by holy living and fervent prayer!

INSPIRATION

by J. C. Ryle

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God." 2 Timothy 3:16

How was the Bible written? "Whence is it from? From heaven, or from men?" Had the writers of the Bible any special or peculiar help in doing their work? Is there anything in the Bible which makes it unlike all other books, and therefore demands our respectful attention? These are questions of vast importance. They are questions to which I wish to offer an answer in this paper. To speak plainly, the subject I propose to examine is that deep one—the inspiration of Scripture. **I believe the Bible to have been written by inspiration of God**, and I want others to be of the same belief.

The subject is ***always important***. I place it purposely in the very forefront of the papers which compose this volume. I ask a hearing for the doctrines which I am about to handle, because they are drawn from a book which is the "Word of God." Inspiration, in short, is the very keel and foundation of Christianity. If Christians have no Divine book to turn to as the warrant of their doctrine and practice, they have no solid ground for present peace or hope, and no right to claim the attention of mankind. They are building on a quicksand, and their faith is vain. We ought to be able to say boldly, "We are what we are, and we do what we do, because we have here a book which we believe to be the Word of God."

The subject is one of ***peculiar importance*** in the present day. Infidelity and scepticism abound everywhere. In one form or another they are to be found in every rank and class of society. Thousands of Englishmen are not ashamed to say that they regard the Bible as an old obsolete Jewish book, which has no special claim on our faith and obedience, and that it contains many inaccuracies and defects. Myriads who will not go so far as this are wavering and shaken in their belief, and show plainly by their lives that they are not quite sure that the Bible is true. In a day like this the true Christian should be able to set his foot down firmly, and to render a reason of his confidence in God's Word. He should be able by sound arguments to meet and silence the gainsayer—if he cannot convince him. He should be able to show good cause why he thinks the Bible is "from heaven, and not of men."

The subject without doubt is a ***very difficult*** *one*. It cannot be followed up without entering on ground which is dark and mysterious to mortal man. It involves the discussion of things which are miraculous, and supernatural, and above reason, and cannot be fully explained. But difficulties must not turn us away from any subject in religion. There is not a science in the world about which questions may not be asked which no one can answer. It is poor philosophy to say we will believe nothing unless we can understand everything! We must not give up the subject of inspiration in despair because it contains things "hard to be understood." There still remains a vast amount of ground which is plain to every common understanding. I invite my readers to occupy this ground with me today, and to hear what I have got to say on the Divine authority of God's Word.

In considering the subject before us, there are two things which I propose to do—

I. In the first place, I shall try to show the general truth, *that the Bible is given by inspiration of God.*

II. In the second place, I shall try to show *the extent to which the Bible is inspired.*

I trust that all who read this paper will take up the subject in a serious and reverent spirit. This question of inspiration is no light one. It involves tremendously grave consequences. If the Bible is not the Word of God and inspired, the whole of Christendom for 1800 years has been under an immense delusion; half the human race has been cheated and deceived, and Christian churches are monuments of folly. If the Bible is the Word of God and inspired, all who refuse to believe it are in fearful danger—they are living on the brink of eternal misery. No man, in his sober senses, can fail to see that the whole subject demands most serious attention.

I. In the first place, I propose to show the general truth—that **the Bible is given by inspiration of God.**

In saying this, I mean to assert that the Bible is utterly unlike all other books that were ever written, because its writers were specially inspired, or enabled by God, for the work which they did. I say that this Book comes to us with a claim which no other book possesses. It is stamped with Divine authority. In this respect it stands entirely alone. Sermons, and tracts, and theological writings of all kinds, may be sound and edifying—but they are only the handiwork of uninspired man. The Bible alone is the Book of God.

Now I shall not waste time in proving that the Scriptures are genuine and authentic, that they were really written by the very men who profess to have written them, and that they contain the very things which they wrote. I shall not touch what are commonly called external evidences. I shall bring forward the book itself, and put it in the witness box. I shall try to show that nothing can possibly account for the Bible being what it is, and doing what it has done, except the theory that it is the Word of God. I lay it down broadly, as a position which cannot be turned, that the Bible itself, fairly examined, is the best witness of its own inspiration. I shall content myself with stating some plain facts about the Bible, which can neither be denied nor explained away. And the ground I shall take up is this—that these facts ought to satisfy every reasonable inquirer that the Bible is of God, and not of man. They are simple facts, which require no knowledge of Hebrew, or Greek, or Latin, in order to be understood; yet they are facts which prove to my own mind conclusively that the Bible is superhuman, or not of man.

(a) It is a fact, that **there is an *extraordinary fullness and richness in the contents of the Bible***. It throws more light on a vast number of most important subjects than all the other books in the world put together. It boldly handles matters which are beyond the reach of man, when left to himself. It treats of things which are mysterious and invisible—the soul, the world to come, and eternity—depths which man has no line to fathom. All who have tried to write of these things, without Bible light, have done little but show their own ignorance. They grope like the blind; they speculate; they guess; they generally make the darkness more visible, and land us in a region of uncertainty and doubt. How dim were the views of Socrates, Plato, Cicero, and Seneca! A well-taught Sunday scholar, in this day, knows more spiritual truth than all these sages put together!

The Bible alone gives a reasonable account of the *beginning and end of the GLOBE* on which we live. It starts from the birthday of sun, moon, stars, and earth in their present order, and shows us creation in its cradle. It foretells the dissolution of all things, when the earth and all its works shall be burned up, and shows us creation in its grave. It tells us the story of the world's youth; and it tells us the story of its old age. It gives us a picture of its first days; and it gives us a picture of its last. How vast and important is this knowledge! Can this be the handiwork of uninspired man? Let us try to answer that question.

The Bible alone gives a *true and faithful account of **MAN***. It does not flatter him as novels and romances do; it does not conceal his faults and exaggerate his goodness; it paints him just as he is. It describes him as a fallen creature, of his own nature inclined to evil—a creature needing not only a pardon—but a new heart, to make him fit for heaven. It shows him to be a corrupt being under every circumstance, when left to himself—corrupt after the loss of paradise—corrupt after the flood—corrupt when fenced in by divine laws and commandments—corrupt when the Son of God came down and visited him in the flesh—corrupt in the face of warnings, promises, miracles, judgments, mercies. In one word, it shows man to be by nature always a sinner. How important is this knowledge! Can this be the work of uninspired minds? Let us try to answer that question.

The Bible alone gives us *true views of **GOD***. By nature man knows nothing clearly or fully about Him. All his conceptions of Him are low, groveling, and debased. What could be more degraded than the gods of the Canaanites and Egyptians—of Babylon, of Greece, and of Rome? What can be more vile than the gods of the Hindus and other heathen in our own time?

By the Bible we know that ***God hates sin***. The destruction of the old world by the flood; the burning of Sodom and Gomorrah; the drowning of Pharaoh and the Egyptians in the Red Sea; the cutting off the nations of Canaan; the overthrow of Jerusalem and the Temple; the scattering of the Jews—all these are unmistakable witnesses.

By the Bible we know that ***God loves sinners***. His gracious promise in the day of Adam's fall; His longsuffering in the time of Noah; His deliverance of Israel out of the land of Egypt; His gift of the law at Mount Sinai; His bringing the tribes into the promised land; His forbearance in the days of the Judges and Kings; His repeated warnings by the mouth of His prophets; His restoration of Israel after the Babylonian captivity; His sending His Son into the world, in due time, to be crucified; His commanding the Gospel to be preached to the Gentiles—all these are speaking facts.

By the Bible we learn that ***God knows all things***. We see Him foretelling things hundreds and thousands of years before they take place, and as He foretells so it comes to pass. He foretold that the family of Ham would be a servant of servants—that Tyre would become a rock for drying nets—that Nineveh would become a desolation, that Babylon would be made a desert—that Egypt would be the basest of kingdoms—that Edom would be forsaken and uninhabited—and that the Jews would not be reckoned among the nations. All these things were utterly unlikely and improbable. Yet all have been fulfilled. Once more I say, how vast and important is all this knowledge! Can this Book be the work of uninspired man? Let us try to answer that question.

The Bible alone teaches us that ***God has made a full, perfect, and complete provision for the salvation of fallen man***. It tells of an atonement made for the sin of the world, by the sacrifice and death of God's own Son upon the cross. It tells us that by His death for sinners, as their Substitute, He obtained eternal redemption for all who believe on Him. The claims of God's broken law have now been satisfied. Christ has suffered for sin, the just for the unjust. God can now be just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly. It tells us that there is now a complete remedy for the guilt of sin—even the precious blood of Christ; and peace, and rest of conscience for all who believe on Christ. "Whoever believes on Him shall not perish—but have eternal life." It tells us that there is a complete remedy for

the power of sin—even the almighty grace of the Spirit of Christ. It shows us the Holy Spirit quickening believers, and making them new creatures. It promises a new heart and a new nature to all who will hear Christ's voice, and follow Him. Once more I say, how important is this knowledge! What would we know of all this comfortable truth without the Bible? Can this Book be the composition of uninspired men? Let us try to answer that question.

The Bible alone ***explains the state of things that we see in the world around us.*** There are many things on earth which a natural man cannot explain. The amazing inequality of conditions—the poverty and distress—the oppression and persecution—the shakings and tumults—the failures of statesmen and legislators—the constant existence of uncured evils and abuses—all these things are often puzzling to him. He sees—but does not understand. But the Bible makes it all clear. The Bible can tell him that the whole world lies in wickedness—that the prince of the world, the devil, is everywhere—and that it is vain to look for perfection in the present order of things. The Bible will tell him that neither laws nor education can ever change men's hearts, and that just as no man will ever make a machine work well, unless he allows for friction, so also no man will do much good in the world, unless he always remembers that human nature is fallen, and that the world he works in is full of sin.

The Bible will tell him that there is "a good time" certainly coming—and coming perhaps sooner than people expect it, a time of perfect knowledge, perfect justice, perfect happiness, and perfect peace. But the Bible will tell him this time shall not be brought in by any power but that of Christ coming to earth again. And for that second coming of Christ, the Bible will tell him to prepare. Once more, I say, how important is all this knowledge!

All these are things which men could find nowhere except in the Scriptures. We have probably not the least idea how little we would know about these things if we had not the Bible. We hardly know the value of the air we breathe, and the sun which shines on us, because we have never known what it is to be without them. We do not value the truths on which I have been just now dwelling, because we do not realize the darkness of men to whom these truths have not been revealed. Surely no tongue can fully tell the value of the treasures this one volume contains. Set down that fact in your mind, and do not forget it. The extraordinary contents of the Bible are a great fact which can only be explained by admitting its inspiration. Mark well what I say. It is a simple broad fact, that in the matter of *contents,* the Bible stands entirely alone, and no other book is fit to be named in the same day with it. He that dares to say the Bible is not inspired, let him give a reasonable account of this fact, if he can.

(b) It is another fact that **there is an *extraordinary UNITY and HARMONY in the contents of the Bible,* which is entirely above man**. We all know how difficult it is to get a story told by any three people, not living together, in which there are not some contradictions and discrepancies. If the story is a long one, and involves a large quantity of particulars, unity seems almost impossible among the common run of men. But it is not so with the Bible. Here is a long book written by not less than thirty different people. The **writers** were men of every rank and class in society. One was a lawgiver. One was a warlike king. One was a peaceful king. One was a herdsman. One had been brought up as a publican—another as a physician—another as a learned Pharisee—two as fishermen—several as priests. They lived at different **intervals** over a space of 1500 years; and the greater part of them never saw each other face to face. And yet there is a perfect harmony among all these writers! They all write as if they were under one dictation. The style and handwriting may vary—but the mind that runs through their work is always one and the same. They all tell the same story. They all give one account of man—one account of God—one account of the way of salvation—one account of the human heart. You see truth unfolding under their hands, as you go through the volume of their writings—but you never detect any real contradiction, or contrariety of view.

Let us set down this fact in our minds, and ponder it well. Tell us not that this unity might be the result of chance. No one can ever believe that but a very naive person. There is only one satisfactory account to be given of the fact before us. The Bible is not of man—but of God.

C. It is another fact that **there is *an extraordinary wisdom, sublimity and MAJESTY in the style of the Bible,* which is above man**. Strange and unlikely as it was, the writers of Scripture have produced a book which even at this day is utterly unrivaled. With all our boasted attainments in science and art and learning, we can produce nothing that can be compared with the Bible. Even at this very hour, in 1877, the book stands entirely alone. There is a strain and a style and a tone of thought about it, which separate it from all other writings. There are no weak points, and motes, and flaws, and blemishes. There is no mixture of infirmity and feebleness, such as you will find in the works of even the best Christians. "Holy, holy, holy," seems written on every page. To talk of comparing the Bible with other "sacred books" so-called—such as the Koran, the Shasters, or the book of Mormon, is positively absurd. You might as well compare the sun with a candle—or the Alps with a mole-hill! God seems to have allowed the existence of these pretended revelations, in order to prove the immeasurable superiority of His own Word. To talk of the inspiration of the Bible, as only differing *in degree* from that of such writings as the works of Homer, Plato, Shakespeare, Dante, and Milton—is simply a piece of blasphemous folly. Every honest and unprejudiced reader must see that there is a gulf between the Bible and any other book, which no man can fathom. You feel, on turning from the Scriptures to other works, that you have got into an inferior atmosphere. You feel like one who has exchanged gold for base metal, and heaven for earth. And how can this mighty difference be accounted for? The men who wrote the Bible had no special advantages. They lived in a remote corner of the civilized earth. They had, most of them, little leisure, few books, and no learning—such as learning is reckoned in this world. Yet the book they compose is one which is unrivaled! There is but one way of accounting for this fact. *They wrote under the direct inspiration of God.*

(Carlyle's estimate of the **Koran** is given in the following words. "It is a wearisome, confused jumble, crude, recondite, abounding in endless iterations, long-windedness, entanglement, insupportable stupidity. In short nothing but a sense of duty could carry any European through the Koran, with its unreadable masses of lumber.")

(d) It is another fact that **there is an *extraordinary ACCURACY in the facts and statements of the Bible, which is above man***. Here is a book which has been finished and before the world for nearly 1800 years. These 1800 years have been the busiest and most changeful period the world has ever seen. During this period the greatest discoveries have been made in science, the greatest alterations in the ways and customs of society, the greatest improvements in the habits and usages of life. Hundreds of things might be named which satisfied and pleased our forefathers, which we have laid aside long ago as obsolete, useless, and old-fashioned. The laws, the communication, the education, the houses, the furniture, the clothes, the weapons, the machinery, the transportation—of each succeeding century, have been a continual improvement on those of the century that went before. There is hardly a thing in which faults and weak points have not been discovered. There is scarcely an institution which has not gone through a process of

sifting, purifying, refining, simplifying, reforming, amending, and changing. But all this time men have never discovered a weak point or a defect in the Bible! Infidels have assailed it in vain. There it stands—perfect, and fresh, and complete, as it did eighteen centuries ago. The march of intellect never overtakes it. The wisdom of wise men never gets beyond it. The science of philosophers never proves it wrong. The discoveries of travelers never convict it of mistakes. Are the distant islands of the Pacific laid open? Nothing is found, which in the slightest degree contradicts the Bible account of man's heart. Are the ruins of Nineveh and Egypt ransacked and explored? Nothing is found, which overturns one jot or tittle of the Bible's historical statements. How shall we account for this fact? Who could have thought it possible that so large a book, handling such a vast variety of subjects, should at the end of 1800 years, be found so free from erroneous statements? There is only one account to be given of the fact. The Bible was *written by inspiration of God!*

(e) It is another fact that there is in **the Bible an *extraordinary suitableness to the spiritual needs of all mankind***. It exactly meets the heart of man in every rank or class, in every country and climate, in every age and period of life. It is the only book in existence which is never out of place and out of date. Other books after a time become obsolete and old-fashioned—the Bible never does! Other books suit one country or people, and not another—the Bible suits all. It is the book of the poor and unlearned, no less than of the rich and the philosopher. It feeds the mind of the laborer in his cottage, and it satisfies the gigantic intellects of Newton, Chalmers, Brewster, and Faraday. Lord Macaulay, and John Bright, and the writers of brilliant articles in the *Times,* are all under obligations to the same volume. It is equally valued by the converted New Zealander in the southern hemisphere, and the Red River Indian in the cold north of America, and the Hindu under the tropical sun.

It is the only book, moreover, which seems **always fresh** and evergreen and new. For eighteen centuries it has been studied and prayed over by millions of private Christians, and expounded and explained and preached to us by thousands of ministers. Church Fathers, and Schoolmen, and Reformers, and Puritans, and modern divines—have incessantly dug down into the mine of Scripture, and yet have never exhausted it. It is a well which is never dry—and a field which is never barren. It meets the hearts and minds and consciences of Christians in the nineteenth century as fully as it did those of Greeks and Romans when it was first completed. It suits the the English noble as well as the converted African. It is still the first book which fits the child's mind when he begins to learn true religion, and the last to which the old man clings as he leaves the world.* In short, it suits all ages, ranks, climates, minds, conditions. It is the one book which suits the world.

"Consider the great historical fact that for three centuries this Book has been woven into the life of all that is best and noblest in English history—that it has become the national epic of Britain, and is as familiar to noble and simple—that it is written in the best and purest English, and abounds in exquisite beauties of mere literary form. By the study of what other book could children be so much humanized and made to feel that each figure in that vast historical procession fills, like themselves—but a momentary space in the interval between two eternities, and earns the blessings or the curses of all time, according to its effort to do good and hate evil, even as they also are earning their payment for their work?"—*Huxley's Critiques and Essays*)

Now how shall we account for this singular fact? What satisfactory explanation can we give? There is only one account and explanation. The Bible was *written by Divine inspiration*. It is the book of the world, because He inspired it who formed the world—who made all nations of one blood—and knows man's common nature. It is the book for every heart, because He dictated it who alone knows all hearts, and what all hearts require. *It is the book of God!*

(f) Last—but not least, it is a great fact that **the Bible *has had a most extraordinary effect on the condition of those nations* in which it has been known, taught, and read.**

I invite any honest-minded reader to look at a map of the world, and see what a story that map tells. Which are the countries on the face of the globe at this moment where there is the greatest amount of idolatry, or cruelty, or tyranny, or impurity, or misgovernment, or disregard of life and liberty and truth? Precisely those countries where the Bible is not known. Which are the countries where the greatest quantity of ignorance, superstition, and corruption, is to be found at this very moment? The countries in which the Bible is a forbidden or neglected book—such countries as Spain and the South American States. Which are the countries where liberty, and public and private morality have attained the highest pitch? The countries where the Bible is free to all, like England, Scotland, Germany, and the United States. Yes! *when you know how a nation deals with the Bible, you may generally know what a nation is!*

But this is not all. Let us look nearer home. Which are the cities on earth where the fewest soldiers and police are required to keep order? London, Manchester, Liverpool, New York, Philadelphia—cities where Bibles abound. Which are the countries in Europe where there are the fewest murders and illegitimate births? The Protestant countries, where the Bible is freely read. Which are the Churches and religious bodies on earth which are producing the greatest results by spreading light and dispelling darkness? Those which make much of the Bible, and teach and preach it as God's Word. The Romanist, the Neologian, the Socinian, the deist, the sceptic, or the friends of mere secular teaching, have never yet shown us one Sierra Leone, one New Zealand, one Tinnevelly, as the fruit of their principles. We only can do that who honor the Bible and reverence it as God's Word. Let this fact also be remembered. He that denies the Divine inspiration of the Bible, let him explain this fact if he can.

"The Bible is the fountain of all true patriotism and loyalty in states—it is the source of all true wisdom, sound policy, and equity in Senates, Council-chambers, and Courts of Justice—it is the spring of all true discipline and obedience, and of all valor and chivalry, in armies and fleets, in the battlefield and on the wide sea—it is the origin of all truth and integrity in commerce and in trade, in marts and in shops, in banks and exchanges, in the public resorts of men and the secret silence of the heart. It is the pure, unsullied fountain of all love and peace, happiness, quietness and joy—in families and households. Wherever it is duly obeyed it makes the 'desert' to rejoice and blossom as the rose."—*Wordsworth*.

I place these six facts about the Bible before my readers, and I ask them to consider them well. Take them all six together, treat them fairly, and look at them honestly. Upon any other principle than that of divine inspiration, those six facts appear to me inexplicable and unaccountable. Here is a book written by a succession of Jews, in a little corner of the world, which positively stands alone. Not only were its writers isolated and cut off in a peculiar manner from other nations—but they belonged to a people who have never produced any other book of note except the Bible! There is not the slightest proof that, unassisted and left to themselves, they were capable of writing anything remarkable, like the Greeks and Romans. Yet these men have given the world a volume which for depth,

unity, sublimity, accuracy, suitableness to the needs of man, and power of influencing its readers, is perfectly unrivaled. How can this be explained? How can it be accounted for? To my mind there is only one answer. The writers of the Bible were divinely helped and qualified for the work which they did. The book which they have given to us *was written by inspiration of God!*

"The little ark of Jewish literature still floats above the surges of time, while mere fragments of the wrecked archives of the huge oriental empires, as well as of the lesser kingdoms that surrounded Judea, are now and then cast on our distant shores."—*Rogers on the Superhuman Origin of the Bible.*

For my own part, I believe that in dealing with sceptics, and unbelievers, and enemies of the Bible, Christians are too apt to stand only on the defensive. They are too often content with answering this or that little objection, or discussing this or that little difficulty, which is picked out of Scripture and thrown in their teeth. I believe we ought to act on the aggressive far more than we do, and to press home on the adversaries of inspiration, the enormous difficulties of their own position. We have a right to ask them how they can possibly explain the origin and nature of the Bible, if they will not allow that it is of Divine authority? We have a right to say—"Here is a book which not only courts inquiry but demands investigation. We challenge you to tell us how that Book was written."

How can they account for this Book standing so entirely alone, and for nothing having ever been written equal to it, like it, near it, or fit to be compared with it for a minute? I defy them to give any rational reply on their own principles. On our principles we can. To tell us that man's unassisted mind could have written the Bible is simply ridiculous. It is worse than ridiculous—it is the height of naivety. In short, the 'difficulties of unbelief' are far greater than the 'difficulties of faith'. No doubt there are things "hard to be understood" if we accept the Scriptures as God's Word. But, after all, they are nothing compared to the hard things which rise up in our way, and demand solution—if we once deny inspiration. There is no alternative. Men must either believe things which are grossly improbable, or else they must accept the great general truth that *the Bible is the inspired Word of God.*

II. The second thing which I propose to consider is ***the EXTENT to which the Bible is inspired***. Assuming, as a general truth, that the Bible is given by Divine inspiration, I wish to examine how far and to what degree its writers received Divine help. In short, what is it exactly that we mean when we talk of the Scriptures as "the Word of God"?

This is, no doubt, a difficult question, and one about which the best Christians are not entirely of one mind. The plain truth is that inspiration is a **miracle**; and, like all miracles, there is much about it which we cannot fully understand. We must not confound it with intellectual power, such as great poets and authors possess. To talk of Shakespeare and Milton and Byron being inspired, like Moses and Paul, is to my mind almost profane. Nor must we confound it with the gifts and graces bestowed on the early Christians in the primitive Church. All the Apostles were enabled to preach and work miracles—but not all were inspired to write. We must rather regard it as a special supernatural gift, bestowed on about thirty people out of mankind, in order to qualify them for the special business of writing the Scriptures; and we must be content to allow that, like everything miraculous, we cannot entirely explain it, though we can believe it. A miracle would not be a miracle, if it could be explained. That miracles are possible, I do not stop to prove here. I never trouble myself on that subject until those who deny miracles have fairly grappled with the great fact that Christ rose again from the dead. I firmly believe that miracles are possible, and have been wrought; and among great miracles I place the fact that men were inspired by God to write the Bible. Inspiration, therefore, being a miracle, I frankly allow that there are difficulties about it which at present I cannot fully solve.

The exact **manner** in which the minds of the inspired writers of Scripture worked when they wrote, I do not pretend to explain. Very likely they could not have explained it themselves. I do not admit for a moment that they were mere machines holding pens, and, like typesetters in a printing-office, did not understand what they were doing. I abhor the "mechanical" theory of inspiration. I dislike the idea that men like Moses and Paul were no better than organ pipes, employed by the Holy Spirit, or ignorant secretaries or amanuenses who wrote by dictation what they did not understand. I admit nothing of the kind. I believe that in some marvelous manner the Holy Spirit made use of the reason, the memory, the intellect, the style of thought, and the peculiar mental temperament of each writer of the Scriptures. But how and in what manner this was done I can no more explain than I can the union of two natures, God and man, in the person of our blessed Lord Jesus Christ.

I only know that there is both a Divine and a human element in the Bible, and that while the men who wrote it were really and truly men, the book that they wrote and handed down to us is really and truly the Word of God. I know the *result*—but I do not understand the *process*. The result is, that the Bible is the written Word of God; but I can no more explain the process than I can explain how the water became wine at Cana, or how five loaves fed five thousand men, or how a word raised Lazarus from the dead. I do not pretend to explain miracles, and I do not pretend to explain fully the miraculous gift of inspiration. The position I take up is that, while the Bible-writers were not "machines," as some sneeringly say, they only wrote what God taught them to write. The Holy Spirit put into their minds thoughts and ideas, and then guided their pens in writing them. When you read the Bible you are not reading the unaided, self-taught composition of erring men like ourselves—but thoughts and words which were suggested by the eternal God. The men who were employed to indite the Scripture spoke not of themselves. They "spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." (2 Peter 1:21.) He that holds a Bible in his hand should know that he holds "not the word of man—but of God." (1 Thess. 2:13.)

Concerning the precise extent to which the Bible is inspired, I freely admit that Christians differ widely. Some of the views put forth on the subject appear to me erroneous in the extreme. I shall not shrink from giving my own opinion and stating my reasons for maintaining it. In matters like these I dare not call any man master. Painful as it is to disagree with able and gifted men on religious questions, I dare not take up views of inspiration which my head and heart tell me are unsound, however high and honored the names of those who maintain them. I believe in my conscience that low and defective views of the subject are doing immense damage to the cause of Christ in these last days.

Some hold that some of the books of Scripture are not inspired at all, and have no more authority or claim to our reverence than the writings of any ordinary man. Others who do not go so far as this, and allow that all the books in the Bible are inspired, maintain that inspiration was only partial, and that there are portions in almost every book which are uninspired. Others hold that inspiration means nothing more than general superintendence and direction, and that, while the Bible writers were miraculously preserved from making mistakes in great things and matters necessary to salvation, in things indifferent they were left to their own unassisted faculties, like any other writers. Some hold that all the ideas in the Bible were given by inspiration—but not the words and language in which they are clothed—though how to separate ideas from words it is rather hard to understand! Some, finally, allow the thorough

inspiration of all the Bible, and yet maintain that it was possible for the writers to make occasional mistakes in their statements, and that such mistakes do exist at this day.

From all these views I totally and entirely dissent. They all appear to me more or less defective, below the truth, dangerous in their tendency, and open to grave and insuperable objections. The view which I maintain is that **every book, and chapter, and verse, and syllable of the Bible was originally given by inspiration of God**. I hold that not only the substance of the Bible—but its language—not only the ideas of the Bible—but its words—not only certain parts of the Bible—but every chapter of the book—that all and each are of Divine authority. I hold that the **Scripture not only *contains* the Word of God—but *is* the Word of God**. I believe the narratives and statements of Genesis, and the catalogues in Chronicles, were just as truly written by inspiration as the Acts of the Apostles. I believe Ezra's account of the twenty-nine knives, and Paul's message about the cloak and parchments, were as much written under Divine direction as the 20th of Exodus, the 17th of John, or the 8th of Romans. I do not say, be it remembered, that all these parts of the Bible are of equal importance to our souls. Nothing of the kind! But I do say they were all equally given by inspiration.

"We affirm that the Bible is the Word of God, and that it is not marred with human infirmities. We do not imagine, with some, that the Bible is like a threshing-floor, on which wheat and chaff lie mingled together, and that it is left for the reader to winnow and sift the wheat from the chaff by the fan and sieve of his own mind."—*Wordsworth on "Inspiration."*

In making this statement I ask the reader not to misunderstand my meaning. I do not forget that the Old Testament was written in Hebrew and the New Testament in Greek. The inspiration of every word, for which I contend, is the inspiration of every original Hebrew and Greek word, as the Bible writers first wrote it down. I stand up for nothing more and nothing less than this. I lay no claim to the inspiration of every word in the various versions and translations of God's Word. So far as those translations and versions are faithfully and correctly done, so far they are of equal authority with the original Hebrew and Greek. We have reason to thank God that many of the translations are, in the main, faithful and accurate. At any rate our own English Bible, if not perfect, is so far correct, that in reading it we have a right to believe that we are reading in our own tongue not the word of man—but of God.

Now the view for which I contend—that every word of the Bible is inspired—is not accepted by many good Christians, and is bitterly opposed in many quarters. I shall therefore mention a few **REASONS** why it appears to me the only safe and tenable view which can be adopted, and the only one which is free from innumerable objections. If I err in maintaining it I have the comfort, at any rate, of erring in good company. I only take up the same ground which almost all the Fathers occupied; which Bishop Jewell, and Hooker, and Owen, took up long ago; and which Chalmers, Robert Haldane, Gaussen, Bishop Wordsworth, M'Caul, Burgon, and Archdeacon Lee of the Irish Church, have ably defended in modern days. *I know, however, that men's minds are variously constituted. Arguments and reasons which appear weighty to some are of no weight with others.* I shall content myself with setting down in order the reasons which satisfy me.

(a) For one thing, I cannot see *how the Bible can be a perfect rule of faith and practice* if it is not fully inspired, and if it contains any flaws and imperfections. If the Bible is anything at all it is the statute-book of God's kingdom—the code of laws and regulations by which the subjects of that kingdom are to live—the register-deed of the terms on which they have peace now and shall have glory hereafter. Now, why are we to suppose that such a book will be loosely and imperfectly drawn up, any more than legal deeds are drawn up on earth? Every lawyer can tell us that in legal deeds and statutes every word is of importance, and that property, life, or death may often turn on a single word. Think of the confusion that would ensue if wills, and settlements, and conveyances, and partnership-deeds, and leases, and agreements, and acts of parliament were not carefully drawn up and carefully interpreted, and every word allowed its due weight. Where would be the use of such documents if particular words went for nothing, and everyone had a right to add, or take away, or alter, or deny the validity of words, or erase words at his own discretion? At this rate we might as well lay aside our legal documents altogether. Surely we have a right to expect that in the book which contains our title-deeds for eternity every word will be inspired, and nothing imperfect admitted. If God's statute-book is not inspired, and every word is not of Divine authority, God's subjects are left in a pitiable state. I see much in this.

(b) For another thing, if the Bible is not fully inspired and contains imperfections, I cannot understand *the language which is frequently used about it* in its own pages. Such expressions as "The oracles of God;"—"God says"—"the Holy Spirit spoke by Isaiah the prophet;"—"the Holy Spirit says,"—"Today if you will hear His voice,"—would appear to me inexplicable and extravagant if applied to a book containing occasional blemishes, defects, and mistakes. (Acts 7:38; Rom. 3:2; Heb. 5:12; 1 Peter 4:11; Ephes. 4:8; Heb. 1:8; Acts 28:25; Heb. 3:7; 10:15; Rom. 9:25.) Once grant that every word of Scripture is inspired, and I see an admirable propriety in the language. I cannot understand "the Holy Spirit," making a mistake, or an "oracle" containing anything defective! If any man replies that the Holy Spirit did not *always* speak by Isaiah, I will ask him who is to decide when He did and when He did not? I see much in this.

(c) For another thing, the theory that the Bible was not given by inspiration of God, appears to me utterly *at variance with several quotations from the Old Testament* which I find in the New. I allude to those quotations in which the whole force of the passage turns on one single word, and once even on the use of the singular instead of the plural number. Take, for instance, such quotations as "The Lord said unto my Lord." (Matt. 22:44. "I said, You are gods." (John 10:34.)—"To Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He says not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to your seed, which is Christ." (Gal. 3:16.) —"He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare Your name unto my brethren." (Heb. 2:11, 12.)—In everyone of these cases the whole point of the quotation lies in a single word.* But if this is so, it is hard to see on what principle we can deny the inspiration of all the words of Scripture. At any rate, those who deny verbal inspiration will find it difficult to show us which words are inspired and which are not. Who is to draw the line, and where is it to be drawn? I see much in this.

* It would be easy to multiply texts in proof of this point. I will only name the following—Heb. 2:8; 3:7-19; 4:2-11; 12:27.

(d) For another thing, if the words of Scripture are not all inspired, *the value of the Bible as a weapon in controversy is greatly damaged*, if not entirely taken away. Who does not know that in arguing with Jews, Arians, or Socinians, the whole point of the texts we quote against them often lies in a single word? What are we to reply if an adversary asserts that the special word of some text, on which we ground an argument, is a mistake of the writer, and therefore of no authority? To my mind it appears that the objection would be fatal. It is useless to quote texts if we once admit that not all the words of which they are

composed were given by inspiration. Unless there is some certain standard to appeal to we may as well hold our tongues. Argument is labor in vain if our mouths are to be stopped by the retort, "That text is not inspired." I see much in this.

(e) For another thing, to give up verbal inspiration appears to me to *destroy the usefulness of the Bible as an instrument of public preaching and instruction.* Where is the use of choosing a text and making it the subject of a pulpit address, if we do not believe that every word of the text is inspired? Once let our hearers get hold of the idea that the writers of the Bible could make mistakes in the particular words they used, and they will care little for any reproofs, or exhortations, or remarks which are based on words. "How do you know," they might ask us, "that this word, about which you made such ado yesterday, was given by the Holy Spirit? How do you know that Paul, or Peter, or John did not make a mistake, and use the wrong word? That they could make mistakes about words you yourself allow." I know not what others may think. For myself, I could give no answer. I see much in this.

(f) Last—but not least, the denial of verbal inspiration appears to me to *destroy a great part of the usefulness of the Bible as a source of comfort and instruction in private reading.* Where is the true Christian student of the Bible who does not know that words, particular words, afford a large portion of the benefit which he derives from his daily reading? How much the value of many a cherished text depends on some single phrase, or the number of a substantive, or the tense of a verb? Alas! there would be an end of all this if we once concede that each word is not inspired; and that, for anything we know, some much loved favorite substantive, or verb, or pronoun, or adverb, or adjective, was an Apostle's mistake, and the word of man, not of God! What others might think I know not. For myself, I would be tempted to lay aside my Bible in despair, and become of all men most miserable. I see much in this.

Now, I freely grant that many excellent Christians think that the view I maintain is open to serious objections. That the Bible, generally speaking, is given by inspiration, they firmly maintain. But they shrink from maintaining that inspiration extends to every word of Scripture. I am sorry to differ from these worthy people. But I cannot see the weight and force of their **OBJECTIONS**. Fairly and honestly examined, they fail to carry conviction to my mind.

(a) Some object that there are occasional statements in the Bible which *contradict the facts of history.* Are these all verbally inspired? My answer is that it is far more easy to assert this than to prove it. There is nothing of which we have so few trustworthy remains as very ancient history, and if ancient uninspired history and Bible history seem to disagree, it is generally safer and wiser to believe that Bible history is right and other history wrong. At any rate, it is a singular fact that all recent researches in Assyria, Babylon, Palestine, and Egypt, show an extraordinary tendency to confirm the perfect accuracy of the Word of God. Mr. Smith's discoveries at Babylon are a remarkable example of what I mean. There are buried evidences which God seems to keep in reserve for these last days. If Bible history and other histories cannot be made to agree at present, it is safest to wait.

(b) Some object that there are occasional statements in the Bible which *contradict the facts of natural science.* Are these all inspired? My answer is again, that it is far more easy to assert this than to prove it. The Bible was not written to teach a system of geology, botany, or astronomy, or a history of birds, insects, and animals, and on matters touching these subjects it wisely uses popular language, such as common people can understand. No one thinks of saying that the Astronomer contradicts science because he speaks of the sun's "rising and setting." If the Bible said anywhere that the earth was a flat surface—or that it was a fixed globe round which the sun revolved—or that it never existed in any state before Adam and Eve—there might be something in the objection. But it never does so. It speaks of scientific subjects as they appear. But it never flatly contradicts science.

"The language of Scripture is necessarily adapted to the common state of man's intellectual development, in which he is not supposed to be possessed of science. Hence the phrases used by Scripture are precisely those which science soon teaches man to consider inaccurate. Yet they are not on that account the less fitted for their purpose, for if any terms had been used adapted to a more advanced state of knowledge, they must have been unintelligible to those to whom the Scripture was first addressed."—*Whewell's Philosophy of Inductive Science.*

(c) Some object that there are occasional statements in the Bible which are *monstrous, absurd, and incredible.* Are they really obliged to believe that Eve was tempted by the devil in the form of a serpent—that Noah was saved in an ark—that the Israelites crossed the Red Sea between two walls of water—that Balaam's donkey spoke—and that Jonah actually went into the whale's belly? Are all these statements inspired? My answer is that Christ's apostles speak of these things as historical facts, and were more likely to know the truth about them than we are. After all, do we believe in miracles or not? Do we believe that Christ Himself rose from the dead? Let us stick to that one grand miracle first, and disprove it if we can. If we do believe it, it is foolish to object to things because they are miraculous.

(d) Some object that there are things mentioned occasionally in the Bible which are so *trifling* that they are unworthy to be called inspired. They point to Paul's writing about his cloak, and books, and parchments, and ask if we really think that the Apostle wrote about such little matters by inspiration of God? I answer that the least things affecting any of God's children are not too small for the notice of Him who "numbers the hairs of our heads." There are excellent and edifying lessons to be learned from the cloak and the parchments, as Robert Haldane has shown most convincingly, in his work on the Evidences of Divine Revelation. After all, man knows very little what is great and what is small in God's sight. The history of Nimrod "the mighty hunter" is dispatched in three verses of Genesis, and the history of a Syrian dwelling in tents, called Abraham, fills up no less than fourteen chapters. The microscope applied to the book of nature, can show us God's hand in the least lichen—as well as in the cedar of Lebanon. The smallest trifles, as they seem to us in the Book of Scripture, may turn out to be most striking confirmations of its truth. Paley has shown this admirably in his "Horae Paulinae," and Professor Blunt in his "Undesigned Coincidences."

(e) Some object that there are grave discrepancies in some of the *Bible histories,* especially in the four Gospels, which *cannot be made to harmonize and agree.* Are the words, they ask, all inspired in these cases? Have the writers made no mistakes? I answer that the number of these discrepancies is grossly exaggerated, and that in many cases they are only apparent discrepancies, and disappear under the touch of common sense. Even in the hardest of them we should remember, in common fairness, that circumstances are very likely kept back from us which entirely reconcile everything, if we only knew them. Very often in these days *when two honest, veracious men give a separate account of some long story, their accounts do not quite tally, because one dwells on one part and the other on another.* All well-informed students of history know that the precise day when Charles I. erected

his standard at Nottingham, in the Parliamentary war, has not been settled to this hour.

(f) Some object that *Job's friends,* in their long speeches, *said many weak and foolish things.* Were all their words inspired? An objection like this arises from an illogical and confused idea of what inspiration means. The book of Job contains a historical account of a wonderful part of the old patriarch's history, and a report both of his speeches and of those of his friends. But we are nowhere told that either Job or Eliphaz and his companions spoke all that they spoke by the Holy Spirit. The writer of the book of Job was thoroughly inspired to record all they said. But whether they spoke rightly or wrongly is to be decided by the general teaching of Scripture. No one would say that Peter was inspired when he said, "I know not the Man," in the High Priest's palace. But the writer of the Gospel was inspired when he wrote it down for our learning. In the Acts of the Apostles the letter of Claudius Lysias was certainly not written by inspiration, and Gamaliel, and the town clerk of Ephesus and Tertullus were not inspired when they made their speeches. But it is equally certain that Luke was inspired to write them down and record them in his book.

(g) Some object that Paul, *in the 7th chapter of the 1st epistle to the Corinthians,* when giving certain advice to the Corinthian Church, says at one time, "Not I—but the Lord," and at another, "I—not the Lord." And they ask, Does not this show that in part of his advice he was not inspired? I answer, Not at all. A careful study of the chapter will show that when the Apostle says "Not I—but the Lord," he lays down some principles on which the Lord had spoken already; and when he says "I—not the Lord," he gives advice on some point about which there had been no revelation hitherto. But there is not the slightest proof that he is not writing all the way through under direct inspiration of God.

(h) Some object that there are many *various readings* of the words of Scripture, and that we cannot, therefore, feel sure that we have the original inspired Word of God. I answer that the various readings, when fairly examined, will prove to be absurdly exaggerated in number and importance. Dr. Kennicott, Bengel, and others have proved this long ago. No doubt we may have lost a few of the original words. We have no right to expect infallibility in transcribers and copyists, before the invention of printing. But there is not a single doctrine in Scripture which would be affected or altered if all the various readings were allowed, and all the disputed or doubtful words were omitted. Considering how many hands the Bible passed through before printing was invented, and who the transcribers were, it is marvelous that the various readings are so few! The fact that about the immense majority of all the words in the old Hebrew and Greek Scriptures there is no doubt at all, is little short of a miracle, and demands much thanksgiving to God. One thing is very certain. There is no ancient book which has been handed down to us with so good a text and so few various readings as the Bible.

(i) Finally, some object that occasional parts of the Bible are taken out, copied, and *extracted from the writings of uninspired men,* such as historical chronicles, and pedigrees, and lists of names. Are all these to be regarded as inspired? I reply that there seems no reason why the Holy Spirit should not direct the Bible writers to use materials made ready to their hands, as well as facts which they had seen themselves, and by so directing them, invested such words as they used with Divine authority. When Paul quoted lines from heathen poets he did not mean for us to regard these heathen poets as inspired. But he was taught by God to clothe his ideas in the words which they had used, and by so doing he very likely obtained a favorable reading from many. And when we read such quotations, or read lists of names taken from Jewish chronicles and registers, we need not doubt that Bible writers were taught to use such materials by inspiration of God.

I leave the objections to verbal inspiration at this point, and will detain my readers no longer with them. I will not pretend to deny that the subject has its difficulties, which will probably never be completely solved. I cannot perhaps clear up such difficulties as the mention of "Jeremiah the prophet" in Matthew 27, or reconcile the third and sixth hour in John's and Mark's account of the crucifixion, or explain Stephen's account of Jacob's burial in the seventh chapter of Acts—to my own entire satisfaction. But I have no doubt *these difficulties can be explained,* and perhaps will be some day. These things do not move me. I expect difficulties in such a deep and miraculous matter as inspiration, which I have not eyes to see through. I am content to wait. It was a wise saying of Faraday, that "there are many questions about which it is the highest philosophy to keep our minds in a state of judicious suspense." *It should be a settled rule with us never to give up a great principle, when we have got hold of it, on account of difficulties. Time often makes things clear which at first look dark.* The view of inspiration which presents to my own mind the fewest difficulties, is that in which all the words of Scripture, as well as the thoughts, are regarded as inspired. Here I take my stand.

Remember what I have just said. Never give up a great principle in theology on account of difficulties. Wait patiently, and the difficulties may all melt away. Let that be an axiom in your mind. Allow me to mention an illustration of what I mean. People who are conversant with astronomy know that before the discovery of the planet Neptune there were difficulties which greatly troubled the most scientific astronomers, respecting certain aberrations of the planet Uranus. These aberrations puzzled the minds of astronomers; and some of them suggested that they might possibly prove the whole Newtonian system to be untrue. But just at that time a well-known French astronomer, named Leverrier, read before the Academy of Science at Paris a paper, in which he laid down this great axiom—that it did not become a scientific man to give up a principle because of difficulties which apparently could not be explained. He said in effect, "We cannot explain the aberrations of Uranus now; but we may be sure that the Newtonian system will be proved to be right, sooner or later. Something may be discovered one day which will prove that these aberrations may be accounted for, and yet the Newtonian system remain true and unshaken." A few years after, the anxious eyes of astronomers discovered the last great planet, Neptune. This planet was shown to be the true cause of all the aberrations of Uranus; and what the French astronomer had laid down as a principle in science was proved to be wise and true. The application of the anecdote is obvious. Let us beware of giving up any first principle in theology. Let us not give up the great principle of plenary verbal inspiration because of apparent difficulties. The day may come when they will all be solved. In the meantime we may rest assured that the difficulties which beset any other theory of inspiration are tenfold greater than any which beset our own.

Let me now conclude this paper with a few words of plain **APPLICATION**. Let us lay aside all deep discussion of hard things about the manner of inspiration. Let us take it for granted that, in some way or other, whether we can explain it or not—we hold the Bible to be the Word of God. Let us start from this point. Let my readers give me a hearing, while I say a few things which appear to me to deserve their attention.

1. Is the Bible the Word of God? Then *mind that you do not neglect it.* Read it—read it! Begin to read it this very day. What greater insult to God can a man be guilty of than to refuse to read the letter God sends him from heaven? Oh, be sure, if you will not read your Bible, you are in fearful danger of losing your soul!

You are in danger, because ***God will reckon with you for your neglect of the Bible in the day of judgment***. You will have to give account of your use of time, strength, and money; and you will also have to give account of your use of the Word. You will not stand at that bar on the same level, in point of responsibility, with the dweller in central Africa, who never heard of the Bible. Oh, no! To whom much is given, of them much will be required. Of all men's buried talents, none will weigh them down so heavily as a neglected Bible. As you deal with the Bible, so God will deal with your soul. Will you not repent, and turn over a new leaf in life, and read your Bible?

You are in danger, because ***there is no degree of error in religion into which you may not fall***. You are at the mercy of the first clever Jesuit, Mormonite, Socinian, Turk, or Jew, who may happen to meet you. A land of unwalled villages is not more defenseless against an enemy than a man who neglects his Bible. You may go on tumbling from one step of delusion to another, until at length you are landed in the pit of hell. I say once more, Will you not repent and read your Bible?

You are in danger, because ***there is not a single reasonable excuse you can allege for neglecting the Bible***. You have no time to read it—indeed! But you can make time for eating, drinking, sleeping, getting money and spending money, and perhaps for newspaper reading and smoking. You might easily make time to read the Word. Alas, it is not lack of time—but waste of time that ruins souls! You find it too troublesome to read—indeed! You had better say at once it is too much trouble to go to heaven, and you are content to go to hell. Truly these excuses are like the rubbish around the walls of Jerusalem in Nehemiah's days. They would all soon disappear if, like the Jews, you had "a mind to work." I say for the last time, Will you not repent and read your Bible?

Believe me, believe me, the *Bible* itself is the best witness of its own inspiration. The men who quibble and make difficulties about inspiration are too often the very men who never read the Scriptures at all. The darkness and hardness and obscurity they profess to complain of are far more often in their own hearts than in the book. Oh, be persuaded! Take it up and begin to read.

2. Is the Bible the Word of God? Then be sure you always *read it with deep reverence.* Say to your soul, whenever you open the Bible, "O my soul, you are going to read a message from God!" The sentences of judges, and the speeches of kings, are received with awe and respect. How much more reverence is due to the words of the Judge of judges, and King of kings! Avoid, as you would cursing and swearing, that irreverent habit of mind into which some modern divines have unhappily fallen, in speaking about the Bible. They handle the contents of the holy book as carelessly and disrespectfully as if the writers were such men as themselves. They make one think of a child composing a book to expose the fancied ignorance of his own father—or of a pardoned murderer criticizing the handwriting and style of his own reprieve. Enter rather into the spirit of Moses on Mount Horeb—"take your shoes from off your feet; the place whereon you stand is holy ground."

3. Is the Bible the Word of God? Then be sure you never read it without *fervent prayer for the help and teaching of the Holy Spirit.* Here is the rock on which many make shipwreck. They do not ask for wisdom and instruction, and so they find the Bible dark, and carry nothing away from it. You should pray for the Spirit to guide you into all truth. You should beg the Lord Jesus Christ to "open your understanding," as He did that of His disciples. The Lord God, by whose inspiration the book was written, keeps the keys of the book, and alone can enable you to understand it profitably. Nine times over in one Psalm does David cry, "Teach me." Five times over, in the same Psalm, does he say, "Give me understanding." Well says John Owen, Dean of Christ Church, Oxford, "There is a sacred light in the Word—but there is a covering and veil on the eyes of men, so that they cannot behold it aright. Now, the removal of this veil is the peculiar work of the Holy Spirit." Humble prayer will throw more light on your Bible than Poole, or Henry, or Scott, or Burkitt, or Bengel, or Alford, or Wordsworth, or Barnes, or Ellicott, or Lightfoot, or any commentary that ever was written.

The Bible is a large book or a small one, a dark or a bright one, according to the spirit in which men read it. Intellect alone will do nothing with it. Wranglers and witty men will not understand it unless their hearts are right as well as their heads. The highest critical and grammatical knowledge will find it a sealed book without the teaching of the Holy Spirit. Its contents are often "hid to the wise and prudent and revealed to babes." Remember this, and say always, when you open your Bible, "O God, for Christ's sake, give me the teaching of the Spirit."

4. Finally, is the Bible the Word of God? Then let us all resolve *from this day forward to prize the Bible more.* Let us not fear being idolaters of this blessed book. Men may easily make an idol of the Church, of ministers, of sacraments, or of intellect. Men cannot make an idol of the Word. Let us regard all who would damage the authority of the Bible, or impugn its credit, as spiritual robbers. We are traveling through a wilderness—they rob us of our only guide. We are voyaging over a stormy sea—they rob us of our only compass. We are toiling over a weary road—they pluck our staff out of our hands. And what do these spiritual robbers give us in place of the Bible? What do they offer as a safer guide and better provision for our souls? Nothing! absolutely nothing! Big swelling words! Empty promises of new light! High sounding jargon; but nothing substantial and real! They would gladly take from us the bread of life, and they do not give us in its place so much as a stone. Let us turn a deaf ear to them. Let us firmly grasp and prize the Bible more and more, the more it is assaulted.

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter. God has given us the Bible to be a light to guide us to everlasting life. Let us not neglect this precious gift. Let us read it diligently, walk in its light, and we shall be saved.

FORGIVENESS

By J. C. Ryle

"Your sins are forgiven!" 1 John 2:12

There is a clause near the end of the Apostle's Creed, which, I fear, is often repeated without thought or consideration. I refer to the

clause which contains these words, "I believe in the Forgiveness of sins." Thousands, I am afraid, never reflect what those words mean. I propose to examine the subject of them in the following paper, and I invite the attention of all who care for their souls, and want to be saved. Do we believe in the "Resurrection of our bodies"? Then let us see to it that we know something by experience of the "Forgiveness of our sins."

I. ***Let me show, first of all, our need of forgiveness.***

All people need forgiveness, because all people are sinners. He that does not know this, knows nothing in religion. It is the very A B C's of Christianity, that a man should know his right place in the sight of God, and understand his deserts.

We are *all* ***great*** *sinners.* "There is none righteous, no, not one." "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." (Rom. 3:10, 23.) Sinners we were born, and sinners we have been all our lives. We take to sin naturally from the very first. No child ever needs schooling and education to teach it to do wrong. No devil, or bad companion, ever leads us into such wickedness as our own hearts. And "the wages of sin is death." (Rom. 6:23.) We must either be forgiven, or lost eternally.

We are *all* ***guilty*** *sinners* in the sight of God. We have broken His holy law. We have transgressed His precepts. We have not done His will. There is not a commandment in all the ten which does not condemn us. If we have not broken it in deed we have in word; if we have not broken it in word, we have in thought and imagination—and that continually. Tried by the standard of the fifth chapter of Matthew, there is not one of us that would be acquitted. All the world is "guilty before God." And "as it is appointed unto people once to die, and after this comes the judgment." **We must either be forgiven, or perish everlastingly.** (Rom. 3:19; Heb. 9:27.)

When I walk through the crowded streets of London, I see hundreds and thousands of whom I know nothing beyond their outward appearance. I see some bent on pleasure, and some on business—some who look rich, and some who look poor—some rolling in their carriages, some hurrying along on foot. Each has his own object in view. Each has his own aims and ends, all alike hidden from me. But one thing I know for a certainty, as I look upon them—they are all sinners. There is not a soul among them all but "deserves God's wrath and condemnation." There breathes not the man or woman in that crowd but must die *forgiven,* or else rise again to be condemned forever at the last day.

When I look through the length and breadth of Great Britain I must make the same report. From the Queen on the throne to the pauper in the workhouse—we are all sinners. We Englishmen have got a name among the empires of the earth. We send our ships into every sea, and our merchandise into every town in the world. We have bridged the Atlantic with our steamers. We have made night in our cities like day, with gas lighting. We have changed England into one great county by railways. We can exchange thought between London and Edinburgh in a few seconds by the electric telegraph. But with all our arts and sciences—with all our machinery and inventions—with all our armies and navies—with all our lawyers and statesmen, we have not altered the nature of our people. We are still in the eye of God an island full of *sinners.*

When I turn to the map of the world I must say the same thing. It matters not what quarter I examine—I find men's hearts are everywhere the same, and everywhere wicked. **Sin is the family disease of all the children of Adam.** Never has there been a corner of the earth discovered where sin and the devil do not reign. Wide as the difference is between the nations of the earth, they leave always been found to have one great mark in common. Europe and Asia, Africa and America, Iceland and India, Paris and Peking—all alike have the mark of sin. **The eye of the Lord looks down on this globe of ours, as it rolls round the sun, and sees it covered with corruption and wickedness!** What He sees in the moon and stars, in Jupiter and Saturn, I cannot tell—but on the earth I know He sees sin. (Psalm 14:2, 3.)

I have no doubt such language as this sounds extravagant to some. You think I am going much too far. But mark well what I am about to say next, and then consider whether I have not used the words of soberness and truth.

What then, I ask, is *the life of the best Christian among us all?* What is it but one great career of shortcomings? What is it but a daily acting out the words of our Prayer-book, "leaving undone things we ought to do, and doing things that we ought not to do"? Our faith, how feeble! Our love, how cold! Our works, how few! Our zeal, how small! Our patience, how short-breathed! Our humility, how thread-bare! Our self-denial, how dwarfish! Our knowledge, how dim! Our spirituality, how shallow! Our prayers, how formal! Our desires for more grace, how faint! Never did the wisest of people speak more wisely than when he said, "There is not a just man upon earth, that does good, and sins not." (Eccles. 7:20.) "In many things," says the apostle James, "we offend all." (James 3:2.) And *what is the best action* that is ever done by the very best of Christians? What is it after all but an imperfect work, when tried on its own merits? It is, as Luther says, no better than "a splendid sin." It is always more or less defective. It is either wrong in its motive or incomplete in its performance—not done from perfect principles, or not executed in a perfect way. The eyes of people may see no fault in it—but weighed in the balances of God it would be found lacking, and viewed in the light of heaven it would prove full of flaws. It is like the drop of water which seems clear to the naked eye—but, placed under a microscope, is discovered to be full of impurity. David's account is literally true, "There is none who does good, no, not one." (Psalm 14:3.)

And then *what is the Lord God,* whose eyes are on all our ways, and before whom we have one day to give account? "Holy, holy, holy," is the remarkable expression applied to Him by those who are nearest to Him. (Isaiah 6:3; Rev. 4:8.) It sounds as if no one word could express the intensity of His holiness. One of His prophets says, "He is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity." (Habak. 1:13.) We think the angels exalted beings, and far above ourselves; but we are told in Scripture, "He charged His angels with folly." (Job 4:18.) We admire the moon and stars as glorious and splendid bodies; but we read, "Behold even the stars are not pure in His sight." (Job 25:5.) We talk of the heavens as the noblest and purest part of creation; but even of them it is written, "The heavens are not clean in His sight." (Job 15:15.) What then is anyone of us but a miserable sinner in the sight of such a God as this?

Surely we ought all to cease from proud thoughts about ourselves. We ought to lay our hands upon our mouths, and say with Abraham, "I am dust and ashes;" and with Job, "I am vile;" and with Isaiah, "We are all as an unclean thing;" and with John, "If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." (Gen. 18:27; Job 40:4; Isaiah 64:6; 1 John 1:8.) Where is the man or woman in the whole catalogue of the Book of Life, that will ever be able to say more than this, "I obtained mercy"? What is the glorious company of the apostles, the goodly fellowship of the prophets, the noble army of martyrs—what are they all but

pardoned sinners? Surely there is but one conclusion to be arrived at—**We are all great sinners, and we all need a great forgiveness.**

See now what just cause I have to say that to know our need of forgiveness is the first thing in true religion. Sin is a burden, and must be taken off. Sin is a defilement, and must be cleansed away. Sin is a mighty debt, and must be paid. Sin is a mountain standing between us and heaven, and must be removed. Happy is that mother's child among us that feels all this! **The first step towards heaven is to see clearly that we *deserve hell.*** There are but two alternatives before us—we must either be forgiven, or be miserable forever.

See too how little many people know of the main design of Christianity, though they live in a Christian land. They fancy they are to go to church to learn their duty, and be moral. They forget that the heathen philosophers could have told them as much as this. They forget that such people as Plato and Seneca gave instructions which ought to put to shame the church-going liar, the drunkard, and the thief. They have yet to learn that the leading mark of Christianity is the *remedy* it provides for sin. This is the glory and excellence of the Gospel. It meets man as he really is. It takes him as it finds him. It goes down to the level to which sin has brought him, and offers to raise him up. It tells him of a remedy equal to his disease—a great remedy for a great disease—a great forgiveness for great sinners.

I ask every reader to consider these things well, if he never considered them before. It is no light matter whether you know your soul's necessities or not—it is a matter of life and death. Try, I beseech you, to become acquainted with your own heart. Sit down and think quietly what you are in the sight of God. Bring together the thoughts, and words, and actions of any day in your life, and measure them by the measure of God's Word. Judge yourself honestly, that you may not be condemned at the last day. Oh, that you might find out what you really are! Oh, that you might learn to pray Job's prayer, "Make me to know my transgression and my sin." (Job 13:23.) Oh, that you might see this great truth—that until you are *forgiven,* all your church-going has done nothing for you at all!

II. ***Let me point out, in the second place—the way of forgiveness.***

I ask particular attention to this point, for none can be more important. Granting for a moment that you want pardon and forgiveness, what ought you to do? Where will you go? Which way will you turn? Everything hinges on the answer you give to this question.

Will you turn to *ministers* and put your trust in them? They cannot give you pardon—they can only tell you where it is to be found. They can set before you the bread of life; but you yourself must eat it. They can show you the path of peace; but you yourself must walk in it. The Jewish priest had no power to cleanse the leper—but only to declare him cleansed. The Christian minister has no power to forgive sins—he can only declare and pronounce who they are that are forgiven.

Will you turn to *sacraments and ordinances,* and trust in them? They cannot supply you with forgiveness, however diligently you may use them. By sacraments "faith is confirmed and grace increased," in all who rightly use them. (See Article 27.) But they cannot justify the sinner. They cannot put away transgression. You may go to the Lord's table every Sunday in your life—but unless you look far beyond the sign to the thing signified, you will after all die in your sins. You may attend a daily service regularly—but if you think to establish a righteousness of your own by it, in the slightest degree, you are only getting further away from God every day.

Will you trust in your own *works* and *endeavors,* your virtues and your good deeds, your prayers and your alms? They will never buy for you an entrance into heaven. They will never pay your debt to God. They are all imperfect in themselves, and only increase your guilt. There is no merit or worthiness in them at the very best. The Lord Jesus Christ says expressly, "When you have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants." (Luke 17:10.)

Will you trust in your own *repentance and amendment?* You are very sorry for the past. You hope to do better for time to come. You hope God will be merciful. Alas, if you lean on this, you have nothing beneath you but a broken reed! The judge does not pardon the thief because he is sorry for what he did. Today's sorrow will not wipe off the score of yesterday's sins. It is not an ocean of tears that could ever cleanse an uneasy conscience and give it peace.

Where then must a man go for pardon? Where is forgiveness to be found? There is a way both sure and plain, and into that way I desire to guide every inquirer's feet.

That way is simply to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior. It is to cast your soul, with all its sins, unreservedly on Christ—to cease completely from any dependence on your own works or doings, either in whole or in part—and to rest on no other work but Christ's work, no other righteousness but Christ's righteousness, no other merit but Christ's merit, as your ground of hope. Take this course and you are a pardoned soul. "To Christ," says Peter, "give all the prophets witness, that through His name whoever believes in Him shall receive remission of sins." (Acts 10:43.) "Through this Man," says Paul at Antioch, "is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins, and by Him all who believe are justified from all things." (Acts 13:38.) "In Him," writes Paul to the Colossians, "we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins." (Col. 1:14.)

The Lord Jesus Christ, in great love and compassion, has made a full and complete satisfaction for sin, by suffering death in our place upon the cross. There He offered Himself as a sacrifice for us, and allowed the wrath of God, which we deserved, to fall on His own head. For our sins, as our Substitute, He gave Himself, suffered, and died—the just for the unjust, the innocent for the guilty—that He might deliver us from the curse of a broken law, and provide a complete pardon for all who are willing to receive it. And by so doing, as Isaiah says—He has *borne* our sins; as John the Baptist says—He has *taken away* sin; as Paul says—He has *purged* our sins, and *put away* sin; and as Daniel says—He has *made an end of sin,* and *finished* transgression. (Isaiah 53:11; John 1:29; Heb. 1:3; Heb. 9:26; Dan. 9:24)

And now the Lord Jesus Christ is sealed and appointed by God the Father to be a Prince and a Savior, to give remission of sins to all who will have it. The keys of death and hell are put in His hand. The government of the gate of heaven is laid on His shoulder. He Himself is the door, and by Him all that enter in shall be saved. (Acts 5:31; Rev. 1:18; John 10:9.)

Christ, in one word, has purchased a full forgiveness, if we are only willing to receive it. He has done all, paid all, suffered all that was

needful to reconcile us to God. He has provided a garment of righteousness to clothe us. He has opened a fountain of living waters to cleanse us. He has removed every barrier between us and God the Father, taken every obstacle out of the way, and made a road by which the vilest may return. All things are now ready, and the sinner has only to believe and be saved, to eat and be satisfied, to ask and receive; to wash and be clean.

And faith, simple faith, is the only thing required, in order that you and I may be forgiven. That we will come by faith to Jesus as sinners with our sins—trust in Him—rest on Him—lean on Him—confide in Him—commit our souls to Him—and *forsaking all other hope, cleave only to Him*—this is all and everything that God asks for. Let a man only do this, and he shall be saved. His iniquities shall be found completely pardoned, and his transgressions entirely taken away. Every man and woman that so trusts is wholly forgiven, and reckoned perfectly righteous. His sins are clean gone, and his soul is justified in God's sight, however bad and guilty he may have been!

Faith is the only thing required, *not knowledge*. A man may be a poor unlearned sinner, and know little of books. But if he sees enough to find the foot of the cross, and trust in Jesus for pardon, I will engage, from the authority of the Bible, that he shall not miss heaven. To know Christ is the corner-stone of all saving knowledge.

Faith, I say, and *not conversion*. A man may have been walking in the broad way up to the very hour he first hears the Gospel. But if in that hearing he is awakened to feel his danger, and wants to be saved, let him come to Christ at once, and wait for nothing. That very coming is the beginning of conversion.

Faith, I repeat, and *not holiness*. A man may feel all full of sin, and unworthy to be saved. But let him not tarry outside the ark until he is better. Let him come to Christ without delay, just as he is. Afterwards he shall be holy.

I call upon every reader of these pages to let nothing move him from this strong ground—that *faith in Christ is the only thing needed for our justification*. Stand firm here, if you value your soul's peace. I see many walking in darkness and having no light, from confused notions as to what faith is. They hear that saving faith will work by love and produce holiness, and not finding all this at once in themselves, they think they have no faith at all. They forget that these things are the fruits of faith, and not faith itself, and that to doubt whether we have faith, because we do not see them at once, is like doubting whether a tree is alive, because it does not bear fruit the very day we plant it in the ground. I charge you to settle it firmly in your mind, that in the matter of your forgiveness and justification there is but one thing required, and that is, simple faith in Christ.

I know well that the natural heart dislikes this doctrine. It runs counter to man's notions of religion. It leaves him no room to boast. Man's idea is to come to Christ with a price in his hand—his regularity—his morality, his repentance—his goodness—and so, as it were, to buy his pardon and justification. The Spirit's teaching is quite different—it is first of all, to believe. Whoever *believes shall not perish*. (John 3:16)

Some say such doctrine cannot be right, because it makes the way to heaven too easy. I fear that many such people, if the truth were spoken, find it too hard. I believe in reality it is easier to give a fortune in building a cathedral, or to go to the stake and be burned, than thoroughly to receive "justification by faith without the deeds of the law," and to enter heaven as a sinner saved by grace.

Some say this doctrine is foolishness and enthusiasm. I answer, This is just what was said of it 1800 years ago, and it is a vain cavil now, as it was then. So far from the charge being true, a thousand facts can prove this doctrine to be from God. No doctrine certainly has produced such mighty effects in the world, as the simple proclamation of free forgiveness through faith in Christ. This is the glorious doctrine which was the strength of the Apostles when they went forth to the Gentiles to preach a new religion. They began, a few poor fishermen, in a despised corner of the earth. They turned the world upside down. They changed the face of the Roman empire. They emptied the heathen temples of their worshipers, and made the whole system of idolatry crumble away. And what was the weapon by which they did it all? It was *free forgiveness through faith in Jesus Christ*.

This is the doctrine which brought light into Europe 300 years ago, at the time of the blessed Reformation, and enabled one solitary monk, Martin Luther, to shake the whole Church of Rome. Through his preaching and writing the scales fell from men's eyes, and the chains of their souls were loosed. And what was the lever that gave him his power? It was *free forgiveness through faith in Jesus Christ*.

This is the doctrine which revived our own Church in the middle of last century, when Whitefield, and the Wesleys, and Berridge, and Venn broke up the wretched "spirit of slumber" which had come over the land, and roused people to think. They began a mighty work, with little seeming likelihood of success. They began, few in number, with small encouragement from the rich and great. But they prospered. And why? Because they preached *free forgiveness through faith in Christ*.

This is the doctrine which is the true strength of any Church on earth at this day. It is not education, or endowments, or liturgies, or learning, that will keep a Church alive. Let free forgiveness through Christ be faithfully proclaimed in her pulpits, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against her. Let it be buried, or kept back, and her candlestick will soon be taken away. When the Saracens invaded the lands where Jerome, and Athanasius, and Cyprian, and Augustine once wrote and preached, they found bishops and liturgies, I make no question. But I fear they found no preaching of free forgiveness of sins, and so they swept the Churches of those lands clean away. They were a body without a vital principle, and therefore they fell. Let us never forget the brightest days of a Church are those when "Christ crucified" is most exalted. The dens and caves of the earth, where the early Christians met to hear of the love of Jesus, were more full of glory and beauty in God's sight than ever was Peter's at Rome. The basest barn at this day, where the true way of pardon is offered to sinners, is a far more honorable place than the Cathedral of Cologne or Milan. A Church is only useful so far as she exalts *free forgiveness through Christ*.

This is the doctrine which, of all others, is the mightiest engine for pulling down the kingdom of Satan. The Greenlanders were unmoved so long as the Moravians told them of the creation and the fall of man; but when they heard of redeeming love, their frozen hearts melted like snow in spring. Preach salvation by the sacraments, exalt the Church above Christ, and keep back the doctrine of the Atonement, and the devil cares little—his goods are at peace. But preach a full Christ, and a free pardon by faith in Him, and then Satan will have great wrath, for he knows he has but a short time. John Berridge said he went on preaching morality and nothing else, until he found there was not a moral man in his parish. But when he changed his plan, and began to preach the love of Christ to

sinners, and a free salvation by faith, then there was a stirring of the dry bones, and a mighty turning to God.

This is the only doctrine which will ever bring peace to an uneasy conscience, and rest to a troubled soul. A man may get on pretty well without it so long as he is asleep about his spiritual condition. But once let him awake from his slumber, and nothing will ever calm him but the blood of Atonement, and the peace which comes by faith in Christ. How anyone can undertake to be a minister of religion without a firm grasp of this doctrine, I never can understand. For myself, I can only say, I should think my office a most painful one if I had not the message of free forgiveness to convey. It would be miserable work indeed to visit the sick and dying, if I could not say, "Behold the Lamb of God—believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." The right hand of a Christian minister is the doctrine of free forgiveness through faith in Christ. Give us this doctrine, and we have power—we will never despair of doing good to men's souls. Take away this doctrine, and we are weak as water. We may read the prayers and go through a round of forms—but we are like Samson with his hair shorn—our strength is gone. Souls will not be benefitted by us, and good will not be done.

I commend the things I have been saying to the notice of every reader. I am not ashamed of free pardon through faith in Christ, whatever some may say against the doctrine. I am not ashamed of it, for its fruits speak for themselves. It has done things that no other doctrine can do. It has effected moral changes which laws and punishments have failed to work—which magistrates and policemen have labored after in vain—which education and secular knowledge have proved utterly powerless to produce. Just as the fiercest lunatics in the asylum became suddenly gentle when kindly treated, even so the worst and most hardened sinners have often become as little children, when told of Jesus loving them and willing to forgive. I can well understand Paul ending his Epistle to the erring Galatians with that solemn burst of feeling, "God forbid that I should glory, but in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Gal. 6:14.) The crown has indeed fallen from a Christian's head when he leaves the doctrine of justification by faith.

You should ask yourself whether you have really received the truth which I have been dwelling on, and know it by experience. Jesus, and faith in Him, is the only way to the Father. He who thinks to climb into Paradise by some other road, will find himself fearfully mistaken. Other foundation can no man lay for an immortal soul than that of which I have been feebly speaking. He who ventures himself here is safe. He who is off this rock has got no standing ground at all.

You should seriously consider what kind of a ministry you are in the habit of attending, supposing you have a choice. You have reason indeed to be careful. It is not all the same where you go, whatever people may say. There are many places of worship, I fear, where you might look long for Christ crucified, and never find Him. He is buried under outward ceremonies—thrust behind the baptismal font—lost sight of under the shadow of the Church. "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him." (John 20:13.) Take heed where you settle yourself. Try all by this single test, "Is Jesus and free forgiveness proclaimed here?" There may be comfortable pews—there may be good singing—there may be learned sermons. But if Christ's Gospel is not the sun and center of the whole place, do not pitch your tent there. Say rather with Isaac. "Here, is the wood and the fire—but where is the lamb?" (Gen. 22:7.) Be very sure this is not the place for your soul.

III. ***Let me, in the third place, encourage all who wish to be forgiven.***

I dare be sure this paper will be read by someone who feels he is not yet a forgiven soul. My heart's desire and prayer is that such a one may seek his pardon at once. And I would gladly help him forward, by showing him the kind of forgiveness offered to him, and the glorious privileges within his reach.

Listen to me, then, while I try to exhibit to you the treasures of Gospel forgiveness. I cannot describe its fullness as I ought. Its riches are indeed unsearchable. (Eph. 3:8.) But if you will turn away from it, you shall not be able to say in the day of judgment, you did not at all know what it was.

Consider, then, for one thing, that the forgiveness set before you is a ***GREAT*** *and* ***BROAD*** *forgiveness.* Hear what the Prince of Peace Himself declares, "All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and all blasphemies." (Mark 3:28.) "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall become white as snow—though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." (Isaiah 1:18.) Yes—though your trespasses be more in number than the hairs of your head, the stars in heaven, the leaves of the forest, the blades of grass, the grains of sand on the sea shore—still they can all be pardoned! As the waters of Noah's flood covered over and hid the tops of the highest hills, so can the blood of Jesus cover over and hide your mightiest sins. "His blood cleanses from all sin." (1 John 1:7.) Though to you they seem written with the point of a diamond, they can all be effaced from the book of God's remembrance by that precious blood. Paul names a long list of abominations which the Corinthians had committed, and then says, "Such were some of you—but you are washed." (1 Cor. 6:11.)

Furthermore, it is a ***FULL*** *and* ***COMPLETE*** *forgiveness.* It is not like David's pardon to Absalom, a permission to return home—but not a full restoration to favor. (2 Sam. 14:24.) It is not, as some fancy, a mere letting off, and letting alone. It is a pardon so complete that he who has it is reckoned as righteous as if he had never sinned at all! His iniquities are blotted out. They are removed from him as far as the east from the west. (Psalm 103:12.) There remains no condemnation for him. The Father sees him joined to Christ, and is well pleased. The Son beholds him clothed with His own righteousness, and says, "You are all fair, there is no spot in you." (Cant. 4:7.) Blessed be God that it is so! I verily believe if the best of us all had only one blot left for himself to wipe out, he would miss eternal life. If the holiest child of Adam were in heaven all but his little finger, and to get in depended on himself, I am sure he would never enter the kingdom. If Noah, Daniel, and Job, had had but one day's sins to wash away, they would never have been saved. Praised be God, that in the matter of our pardon there is nothing left for man to do! Jesus does all, and man has only to hold out an empty hand and to receive.

Furthermore, it is a ***FREE*** *and* ***UNCONDITIONAL*** *forgiveness.* It is not burdened with an "if," like Solomon's pardon to Adonijah, "If he will show himself a worthy man." (1 Kings 1:52.) Nor yet are you obliged to carry a price in your hand, or to bring an upright character with you to prove yourself deserving of mercy. Jesus requires but one character, and that is that you should feel yourself a sinful, bad man. He invites you to "buy wine and milk without money and without price," and declares, "Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely." (Isaiah 55:1; Rev 22:17.) Like David in the cave of Adullam, He receives everyone that feels in distress and a debtor, and rejects none. (1 Sam. 22:2.) Are you a sinner? Do you need a Savior? Then come to Jesus just as you are, and your soul shall live.

Again, it is an ***OFFERED*** *forgiveness.* I have read of earthly Kings who knew not how to show mercy. The King of kings is not like them. He calls on people to come to Him, and be pardoned. "Unto you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men." (Prov. 8:4.) "Ho! everyone who thirsts, come to the waters." (Isaiah 55:1.) "If any man thirsts, let him come unto Me and drink." (John 7:37.) "Come unto Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matt. 11:28.) It ought to be a great comfort to you and me to hear of any pardon at all; but to hear Jesus Himself inviting us, to see Jesus Himself holding out His hand to us—the Savior seeking the sinner before the sinner seeks the Savior—this is encouragement, this is strong consolation indeed!

Again, it is a ***WILLING*** *forgiveness.* I have heard of pardons granted in reply to long entreaty, and wrung out by much importunity. King Edward the Third of England would not spare the citizens of Calais until they came to him with halters round their necks, and his own Queen interceded for them on her knees. But Jesus is "good and ready to forgive." (Psalm 86:5.) He "delights in mercy." (Micah 7:18.) Judgment is "His strange work." He is not willing that any should perish. (Isai. 28:21, 2 Pet. 3:9.) He would gladly have all men saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth. (1 Tim. 2:4.) He wept over unbelieving Jerusalem. "As I live," He says, "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked. Turn! Turn from your evil ways; why will you die?" (Ezek. 33:11.) You and I may well come boldly to the throne of grace. He who sits there is far more willing and ready to give mercy than we are to receive it. (Heb. 4:16.)

Besides this, it is a ***TRIED*** *forgiveness.* Thousands and tens of thousands have sought for pardon at the mercy-seat of Christ, and not one has ever returned to say that he sought in vain. Sinners of every name and nation—sinners of every sort and description—have knocked at the door of the fold, and none have ever been refused admission. Zaccheus the extortioner, Magdalen the harlot, Saul the persecutor, Peter the denier of his Lord, the Jews who crucified the Prince of Life, the idolatrous Athenians, the adulterous Corinthians, the ignorant Africans, the bloodthirsty New Zealanders, all have ventured their souls on Christ's promises of pardon—and none have ever found them to fail. If the way which the Gospel sets before us were a new and untraveled way—we might well feel faint-hearted. But it is not so. It is an old path. It is a path worn by the feet of many pilgrims, and a path in which the footsteps are all one way. The treasury of Christ's mercies has never been found empty. The well of living waters has never proved dry.

Besides this, it is a ***PRESENT*** *forgiveness.* All who believe in Jesus are at once justified from all things. (Acts 13:39.) The very day the younger son returned to his father's house he was clothed with the best robe, had the ring put on his hand, and the shoes on his feet. (Luke 15.) The very day Zaccheus received Jesus he heard those comfortable words, "This day is salvation come to this house." (Luke 19:9.) The very day that David said, "I have sinned against the Lord," he was told by Nathan, "The Lord also has put away your sin." (2 Sam. 12:13.) The very day you first flee to Christ, your sins are all removed. Your pardon is not a thing far away, to be obtained only after many years. It is near at hand. It is close to you, within your reach, all ready to be bestowed. Believe, and that very moment it is your own. "He who believes is not condemned." (John 3:18.) It is not said, "He shall not be," or "will not be," but "is not." From the time of his believing, condemnation is gone. "He who believes has everlasting life." (John 3:36.) It is not said, "He shall have," or "will have," it is "has." It is his own as surely as if he was in heaven, though not so evidently so to his own eyes. You must not think forgiveness will be nearer to a believer in the day of judgment than it was in the hour he first believed. His complete salvation from the *power* of sin is every year nearer and nearer to him; but as to his forgiveness and justification, and deliverance from the guilt of sin, it is a finished work from the very minute he first commits himself to Christ.

Last, and best of all, it is an ***EVERLASTING*** *forgiveness.* It is not like Shimei's pardon—a pardon that may some time be revoked and taken away. (1 Kings 2:9.) Once justified, you are justified forever. Once written down in the book of life, your name shall never be blotted out. **The sins of God's children are said to be cast into the depths of the sea—to be sought for and not found—to be remembered no more—to be cast behind God's back.** (Mic. 7:19; Jer. 50:20; 31:34; Isa. 38:17.) Some people fancy they may be justified one year and condemned another—children of adoption at one time, and strangers by and by—heirs of the kingdom in the beginning of their days, and yet servants of the devil in their end. I cannot find this in the Bible—as the New Zealander told the Romish priest, *"I do not see it in the Book."* It seems to me to overturn the good news of the Gospel altogether, and to tear up its comforts by the roots. I believe the salvation Jesus offers is an everlasting salvation, and a pardon once sealed with His blood shall never be reversed.

I have set before you the nature of the forgiveness offered to you. I have told you but a little of it, for my words are weaker than my will. The half of it remains untold. The greatness of it is far more than any report of mine. But I think I have said enough to show you it is worth the seeking, and I can wish you nothing better than that you may strive to make it your own.

Do you call it nothing to look forward to death without fear, and to judgment without doubtings, and to eternity without a sinking heart? Do you call it nothing to feel the world slipping from your grasp, and to see the grave getting ready for you, and the valley of the shadow of death opening before your eyes, and yet to be not afraid? Do you call it nothing to be able to think of the great day of account, the throne, the books, the Judge, the assembled worlds, the revealing of secrets, the final sentence, and yet to feel, "I am safe"? This is the portion, and this the privilege of a forgiven soul.

Such an one is *on a* ***rock***. When the rain of God's wrath descends, and the floods come, and the winds blow, his feet shall not slide, his habitation shall be sure.

Such an one is *in an* ***ark***. When the last fiery deluge is sweeping over all things on the surface of the earth, it shall not come near him. He shall be caught up, and borne securely above it all.

Such an one is *in a* ***hiding place***. When God arises to judge, and people are calling to rocks and mountains to fall upon them and cover them, the Everlasting Arms shall be thrown around him, and the storm shall pass over his head. He shall "abide under the shadow of the Almighty." (Psalm 91:1.)

Such an one is *in a* ***city of refuge***. The accuser of the brethren can lay no charge against him. The law cannot condemn him. There is a wall between him and the avenger of blood. The enemies of his soul cannot hurt him. He is in a secure sanctuary.

Such an one is ***rich***. He has treasure in heaven which cannot be affected by worldly changes, compared to which Peru and California are nothing at all. He need not envy the richest merchants and bankers. He has a portion that will endure when bank-notes and dollars are worthless things. He can say, like the Spanish ambassador, when shown the treasury at Venice, "My Master's treasury has no bottom." He has Christ.

Such an one is ***insured***. He is ready for anything that may happen. Nothing can harm him. Banks may break, and Governments may be overturned. Famine and pestilence may rage around him. Sickness and sorrow may visit his own fireside. But still he is ready for all—ready for health—ready for disease—ready for tears—ready for joy—ready for poverty—ready for plenty—ready for life, ready for death. He has Christ. He is a pardoned soul. "Blessed" indeed "is he whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered." (Ps. 32:1.)

How will anyone escape if he neglects so great salvation? Why should you not lay hold on it at once, and say, Pardon me, even me also, O my Savior! What would you have, if the way I have set before you does not satisfy you? Come while the door is open. Ask, and you shall receive.

IV. ***Let me, in the last place, supply the readers of this paper with some marks of having found forgiveness.***

I dare not leave out this point. Too many people presume they are forgiven, who have no evidence to show. Not a few cannot think it possible they are forgiven, who are plainly in the way to heaven, though they may not see it themselves. I would gladly raise hope in some, and self-inquiry in others; and to do this, let me set down in order the leading marks of a forgiven soul.

(a) Forgiven souls *HATE SIN.* They can enter most fully into the words of our Communion Service, "The remembrance of sin is grievous unto them, and the burden of it is intolerable." It is the serpent which bit them—how should they not shrink from it with horror? It is the poison which brought them to the brink of eternal death—how should they not loathe it with a godly disgust? It is the Egyptian enemy which kept them in hard bondage—how should not the very memory of it be bitter to their hearts? It is the disease of which they carry the marks and scars about them, and from which they have scarcely recovered—well may they dread it, flee from it, and long to be delivered altogether from its power! Remember how the woman in Simon's house wept over the feet of Jesus. (Luke 7:38.) Remember how the Ephesians publicly burned their wicked books. (Acts 19:19.) Remember how Paul mourned over his youthful transgressions, "I am not fit to be called an Apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God." (1 Cor. 15:9.) If you and sin are friends, you and God are not yet reconciled. You are not fit for heaven; for one main part of heaven's excellence is the absence of all sin.

(b) Forgiven souls *LOVE CHRIST.* This is that one thing they can say, if they dare say nothing else—they do love Christ. His person, His offices, His work, His name, His cross, His blood, His words, His example, His ordinances—all, all are precious to forgiven souls. The ministry which exalts Him most, is that which they enjoy most. The books which are most full of Him, are most pleasant to their minds. The people on earth they feel most drawn to, are those in whom they see something of Christ. His name is as ointment poured forth, and comes with a peculiar sweetness to their ears. (Cant. 1:3.) They would tell you they cannot help feeling as they do. He is their Redeemer, their Shepherd, their Physician, their King, their strong Deliverer, their gracious Guide, their hope, their joy, their All. Were it not for Him they would be of all people most miserable. They would as soon consent that you should take the sun out of the sky, as Christ out of their religion. Those people who talk of "the Lord," and "the Almighty," and "the Deity," and so forth—but have not a word to say about Christ, are in anything but a right state of mind. What says the Scripture? "He who honors not the Son, honors not the Father who has sent Him." (John 5:23.) "If any man loves not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema." (1 Cor. 16:22.)

(c) Forgiven souls are *HUMBLE.* They cannot forget that they owe all they have and hope for to free grace, and this keeps them lowly. They are brands plucked from the fire—debtors who could not pay for themselves—captives who must have remained in prison forever—but for undeserved mercy—wandering sheep who were ready to perish when the Shepherd found them! What right then have they to be proud? I do not deny that there are proud saints. But this I do say—they are of all God's creatures the most inconsistent, and of all God's children the most likely to stumble and pierce themselves with many sorrows. Forgiveness more often produces the spirit of Jacob, "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and all the truth which You have showed unto Your servant" (Gen. 32:10); and of Hezekiah, "I shall go softly all my years" (Isaiah 38:15); and of the Apostle Paul, "I am less than the least of all saints—chief of sinners." (Eph. 3:8; 1 Tim. 1:15.) **We have nothing we can call our own--but sin and weakness. Surely there is no garment that befits us so well, as humility.**

(d) Forgiven souls are *HOLY.* Their chief desire is to please Him who has saved them, to do His will, to glorify Him in body and in Spirit, which are His. "What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits?" (Ps. 116:12), is a leading principle in a pardoned heart. It was the remembrance of Jesus showing mercy that made Paul in labors so abundant, and in doing good so unwearied. It was a sense of pardon that made Zaccheus say, "The half of my goods I give to the poor, and if I have taken anything from any man falsely, I will restore him four-fold." (Luke 19:8.) If anyone points out to me believers who are in a carnal, slothful state of soul, I reply in the words of Peter, "They have forgotten they were purged from their old sins." (2 Pet. 1:9.) But if you show me a man deliberately living an unholy and licentious life, and yet boasting that his sins are forgiven, I answer, "He is under a ruinous delusion, and is not forgiven at all." I would not believe he is forgiven if an angel from heaven affirmed it, and I charge you not to believe it too. **Pardon of sin and love of sin are like oil and water—they will never go together. All who are washed in the blood of Christ, are also sanctified by the Spirit of Christ.**

(e) Forgiven souls are *FORGIVING.* They do as they have been done by. They look over the offences of their brethren. They endeavor to "walk in love, as Christ loved them, and gave Himself for them." (Eph. 5:2.) They remember how God for Christ's sake forgave them, and endeavor to do the same towards their fellow-creatures. Has He forgiven them pounds, and shall they not forgive a few pence? Doubtless in this, as in everything else, they come short—but this is their desire and their aim. A spiteful, quarrelsome Christian is a scandal to his profession. It is very hard to believe that such a one has ever sat at the foot of the cross, and has ever considered how he is praying against himself every time he uses the Lord's Prayer. Is he not saying as it were, "Father, do not forgive me my trespasses at all"? But it is still harder to understand what such a one would do in heaven, if he got there. All ideas of heaven in which forgiveness has not a place, are castles in the air and vain fancies. Forgiveness is the way by which every saved soul enters heaven. Forgiveness is the only title by which he remains in heaven. Forgiveness is the eternal subject of song with all the redeemed who inhabit heaven. Surely an unforgiving soul in heaven would find his heart completely out of tune. Surely we know nothing of Christ's love to us but the name of it, if we do not love our brethren.

I lay these things before every reader of this paper. I know well **there are great diversities in the degree of men's attainments in grace, and that saving faith in Christ is consistent with many imperfections**. But still I do believe the five marks I have

just been naming will generally be found more or less in all forgiven souls.

I cannot conceal from you, these marks should raise in many minds great searchings of heart. I must be plain. I fear there are thousands of people called Christians, who know nothing of these marks. They are baptized. They attend the services of their Church. They would not on any account be reckoned infidels. But as to true repentance and saving faith, union with Christ and sanctification of the Spirit, they are "names and words" of which they know nothing at all.

Now if this paper is read by such people, it will probably either alarm them, or make them very angry. If it makes them angry I shall be sorry. If it alarms them I shall be glad. I want to alarm them. I want to awaken them from their present state. I want them to take in the great fact, that they are not yet forgiven, that they have not peace with God—and are on the high road to destruction.

I must say this, for I see no alternative. It seems neither Christian faithfulness, nor Christian charity, to keep it back. I see certain marks of pardoned souls laid down in Scripture. I see an utter lack of these marks in many men and women around me. How then can I avoid the conclusion that they are not yet "forgiven"? And how shall I do the work of a faithful watchman if I do not write it down plainly in so many words? Where is the use of crying Peace! Peace! when there is no peace? Where is the honesty of acting the part of a lying physician, and telling people there is no danger, when in reality they are fast drawing near to eternal death? Surely the blood of souls would be required at my hands if I wrote to you anything less than the truth. "If the trumpet gives an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?" (1 Cor. 14:8.)

Examine yourself, then, before this subject is forgotten. Consider of what sort your religion is. Try it by the five marks I have just set before you. I have endeavored to make them as broad and general as I can, for fear of causing any heart to be sad that God has not made sad. If you know anything of them, though it be but a little, I am thankful, and entreat you to go forward. But if you know nothing of them in your own experience, let me say, in all affection, I stand in doubt of you. I tremble for your soul!

1. And now, before I conclude, let me put **a *PLAIN QUESTION*** to everyone who reads this paper. It shall be short and clear—but it is all important, "Are you forgiven?"

I have told you all I can about forgiveness. Your **need** of forgiveness—the **way** of forgiveness, the **encouragements** to seek forgiveness—the **marks** of having found it—all have been placed before you. Bring the whole subject to bear upon your own heart, and ask yourself, "Am I forgiven? Either I am, or I am not. Which of the two is it?"

You believe perhaps, there is forgiveness of sins. You believe that Christ died for sinners, and that He offers a pardon to the most ungodly. But are you forgiven *yourself?* Have you yourself laid hold on Christ by faith, and found peace through His blood? What profit is there to you in forgiveness, except you get the benefit of it? What does it profit the shipwrecked sailor that the life-boat is alongside, if he does not jump in and escape? What does it avail the sick man that the doctor offers him a medicine, if he only looks at it, and does not swallow it down? Except you lay hold for your own soul, you will be as surely lost as if there was no forgiveness at all.

If ever your sins are to be forgiven, it must be now—now in this life, if ever in the life to come—now in this world, if they are to be found blotted out when Jesus comes again the second time. There must be actual business between you and Christ. Your sins must be laid on Him by faith—His righteousness must be laid on you. His blood must be applied to your conscience, or else your sins will meet you in the day of judgment, and sink you into hell. Oh, how can you trifle when such things are at stake? How can you be content to leave it uncertain whether you are forgiven? Surely that a man can make his will, insure his life, give directions about his funeral, and yet leave his soul's affairs in uncertainty—is an amazing thing indeed.

2. Let me next give **a *SOLEMN WARNING*** to everyone who reads this paper, and knows in his conscience he is not forgiven. Your soul is in awful danger. You may die this year. And if you die as you are, you are lost forever! If you die without pardon, without pardon you will rise again at the last day. There is a sword over your head which hangs by a single hair! There is but a step between you and death. Oh, I wonder that you can sleep quietly in your bed!

You are *not yet forgiven*. Then what have you got by your religion? You go to church. You have a Bible, you have a Prayer-book, and perhaps a Hymn-book. You hear sermons. You join in services. It may be you go to the Lord's table. But what have you really got after all? Any hope? Any peace? Any joy? Any comfort? Nothing! Literally nothing! You have got nothing but mere external religion—if you are not a pardoned soul.

You are *not yet forgiven*. But you trust God will be merciful. Yet why should He be merciful if you will not seek Him in His own appointed way? Merciful He doubtless is, wonderfully merciful to all who come to Him in the name of Jesus. But if you choose to despise His directions, and make a road to heaven of your own—you will find to your cost there is no mercy for you!

You are *not yet forgiven*. But you hope you will be some day. This is like thrusting off the hand of conscience, and seizing it by the throat to stop its voice. Why are you more likely to seek forgiveness at a future time? Why should you not seek it now? Now is the time for gathering the bread of life. The day of the Lord is fast drawing near, and then no man can work. (Exod. 16:26.) The Seventh trumpet will soon sound. The kingdoms of this world will soon become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ. (Rev. 11:15.) Woe to the house which is found without the scarlet line, and without the mark of blood upon the door! (Josh. 2:18; Exod. 12:13.)

Well, you may not feel your need of forgiveness now. But a time may come when you will want it. The Lord in mercy grant that it may not then be too late.

3. Let me next give **an *EARNEST INVITATION*** to all who read this paper and desire forgiveness. I know not who you are, or what you have been in time past. But I say boldly, Come to Christ by faith, and you shall have a pardon. High or low, rich or poor, young men and maidens, old people and children—you cannot be worse than Manasseh and Paul before conversion—than David and Peter after conversion—come all of you to Christ, and you shall be freely forgiven!

Do not think for a moment that you have some great thing to do before you come to Christ. Such a notion is of the earth, earthy; the Gospel bids you come just as you are. Man's idea is to make his peace with God by repentance, and then come to Christ at last. The Gospel way is to receive peace from Christ first of all, and begin with Him. Man's idea is to amend, and turn over a new leaf—and so

work his way up to reconciliation and friendship with God. The Gospel way is first to be friends with God through Christ, and then to work. Man's idea is to toil up the hill, and find life at the top. The Gospel way is first to live by faith in Christ, and then to do His will.

And judge you, everyone, judge you, which is true Christianity? Which is the good news? Which is the glad tidings? First the fruits of the Spirit and then peace with God? Or first peace with God and then the fruits of the Spirit? First sanctification and then pardon? Or first pardon and then sanctification? First service and then life? Or first life and then service? Your own hearts can well supply the answer.

Come then, willing to receive, and not thinking how much you can bring. Come, willing to take what Christ offers, and not fancying you can give anything in return. Come with your sins, and no other qualification but a hearty desire for pardon, and, as sure as the Bible is true, you shall be saved.

You may tell me you are not worthy, you are not good enough, you are not elect. I answer, You are a sinner, and you want to be saved, and what more do you need? You are one of those whom Jesus came to save. Come to Him and you shall have life. Take with you words, and He will hear you graciously. Tell Him all your soul's necessities, and I know from the Bible He will give heed. Tell Him you have heard He receives sinners, and that you are such. Tell Him you have heard He has the keys of life in his hand, and entreat Him to let you in. Tell Him you come in dependence on His own promises, and ask Him to fulfill His word, and "do as He has said." (2 Sam. 7:25.) Do this in simplicity and sincerity, and, my soul for yours—you shall not ask in vain. Do this and you shall find Him faithful and just to forgive your sins, and to cleanse you from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9.)

4. Last of all, let me give **a *word of EXHORTATION*** to all forgiven souls. You are forgiven. Then know the full extent of your privileges, and learn to rejoice in the Lord. You and I are great sinners—but then we have a great Savior. You and I have sinned sins that are past man's knowledge—but then we have "the love of Christ, which passes knowledge," to rest upon. (Eph. 3:19.) You and I **feel our hearts to be a bubbling fountain of evil—but then we have another fountain of greater power in Christ's blood, to which we may daily resort.** You and I have mighty enemies to contend with—but then the "Captain of our salvation" is mightier still, and is ever with us. Why should our hearts be troubled? Why should we be disquieted and cast down? O men and women of little faith that we are! Why do we doubt?

Let us strive every year to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is sad to be content with a little piety. It is honorable to covet the best gifts. We ought not to be satisfied with the same kind of hearing, and reading, and praying, which satisfied us in years gone by. We ought to labor every year to throw more heart and reality into everything we do in our religion. To love Christ more intensely—to abhor sin more thoroughly—to cleave to what is good more closely—to watch even our least ways more narrowly—to declare very plainly that we seek a heavenly country—to put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and be clothed with Him in every place and company—to see more—to feel more—to know more—to do more—these ought to be our aims and desires every year we begin. Truly there is room for improvement in us all.

Let us try to do good to the souls of others, more than we have done hitherto. Alas, it is poor work indeed to be swallowed up in our own spiritual concerns, and taken up with our own spiritual ailments, and never to think of others! We forget that there is such a thing as religious selfishness. Let us count it a sorrowful thing to go to heaven alone, and let us seek to draw companions with us. **We ought never to forget that every man, woman and child around us—will soon be either in heaven or hell.** Let us say to others, as Moses did to Hobab, "Come with us, and we will do you good." (Num. 10:29.) Oh, it is indeed a true saying, "He who waters shall be watered himself." (Prov. 11:25.) The idle, do-little, selfish Christian has little idea what he is missing.

But above all, let us learn to live the life of faith in Jesus more than we have hitherto. Ever to be found by the fountain side—ever to be eating Christ's body by faith, and drinking Christ's blood by faith—ever to have before our minds Christ's dying for our sins—Christ's rising again for our justification—Christ interceding for us at God's right hand—Christ soon coming again to gather us to Himself—this is the mark which we should have continually before our eyes. We may fall short—but let us aim high. Let us walk in the full light of the Sun of righteousness, and then our graces will grow. Let us not be like trees on a cold north wall—weak, half-starved, and unfruitful. Let us rather strive to be like the sunflower—and follow the great Fountain of Light wherever He goes, and see Him with open face. Oh, for an eye more quick to discern His dealings! Oh, for an ear more ready to hear His voice!

Finally, let us say to everything in the world that interferes between ourselves and Jesus Christ, "Stand aside!" Let us dread *allowing* ourselves in the least evil habits, lest insensibly they rise up like a mist and hide Him from our eyes. "In His light alone shall we see light" and feel warmth; and separate from Him we shall find the world a dark and cold wilderness. (Psalm 36:9.) We should call to mind the request of the Athenian philosopher, when the mightiest Monarch on earth asked him what he desired most. "I have," said he, "but one request to make—that you would move from between me and the sun." Let this be the spirit in which you and I are found continually. Let us think lightly of the world's gifts. Let us sit calmly under its cares. Let us care for nothing if we may only ever see the King's face, if we may only ever abide in Christ.

If our sins are forgiven, **our best things are yet to come**. Yet a little time, and we shall "see face to face, and know as we have been known." We shall "see the King in His beauty," and "go out no more." (1 Cor. 13:12; Isa. 33:17; Rev. 3:12.) "Blessed then is he whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sins are covered." (Psalm 32:1.)

JUSTIFICATION!

by J. C. Ryle

"Being justified by faith, we have **peace** with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Romans 5:1

There is a word in the text which heads this page which ought to be very precious in the eyes of Englishmen. That word is *"peace."*

Even in "merry England" we have known something of the horrors of war in the last thirty years. The Crimean war, the Indian mutiny, the Chinese, Abyssinian, and Ashantee wars have left deep marks on the history of our country.

We have tasted some of the tremendous evils which war, however just and necessary, brings in its train. Battle and disease have done their deadly work among our gallant soldiers and sailors. Gentle and simple blood has been shed like water in far distant lands. Many of the best and bravest of our countrymen are lying cold in untimely graves. Hearts in England have been broken by sudden, stunning, crushing bereavements. Mourning has been put on in many a palace, and many a cottage. The light of hundreds of happy firesides has been quenched. The mirth of thousands of homes is gone. Alas, we have learned by bitter experience, what a blessed thing is *peace!*

I desire, however, to call the attention of all who read this paper to the best of all peace—even peace with God. I would gladly speak to you of a peace which this world can neither give nor take away—a peace which depends on no earthly governments, and needs no carnal weapons, either to win it or preserve it—a peace which is freely offered by the King of kings, and is within the reach of all who are willing to receive it.

There is such a thing as "peace with God." It may be felt and known. My heart's desire and prayer is that you may be able to say with the Apostle Paul, "Being justified by faith, I have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Rom. 5:1.)

There are four things which I propose to bring before you, in order to throw light on the whole subject.

I. Let me show you the **chief privilege** of a true Christian*, "he has peace with God."*

II. Let me show you the **fountain** from which that privilege flows*, "he is justified."*

III. Let me show you the **rock** from which that fountain springs*, "Jesus Christ."*

IV. Let me show you the **hand** by which the privilege is made our own*, "faith."*

Upon each of these four points I have something to say. May the Holy Spirit make the whole subject peace giving to some souls!

I. First of all, let me show **the chief privilege of a true Christian—*he has peace with God*.**

When the apostle Paul wrote his epistle to the Romans, he used five words which the wisest of the heathen could never have used. Socrates, and Plato, and Aristotle, and Cicero, and Seneca were wise people. On many subjects they saw more clearly than most people in the present day. They were people of mighty minds, and of a vast range of intellect. But not one of them could have said as the apostle did, "I have peace with God." (Rom 5:1.)

When Paul used these words, he spoke not for himself only—but for all true Christians. Some of them no doubt have a greater sense of this privilege than others. All of them find an evil principle within, warring against their spiritual welfare day by day. All of them find their adversary, the devil, waging an endless battle with their souls. All of them find that they must endure the enmity of the world. But all, notwithstanding, to a greater or less extent, "have peace with God."

This peace with God is a calm, intelligent sense of friendship with the Lord of heaven and earth. He who has it, feels as if there was no barrier and separation between himself and his holy Maker. He can think of himself as under the eye of an all-seeing Being, and yet, not feel afraid. He can believe that this all-seeing Being beholds him, and yet is not displeased.

Such a man can see *death* waiting for him, and yet not be greatly moved. He can go down into the cold river—close his eyes on all he has on earth—launch forth into a world unknown, and take up his abode in the silent grave—and yet feel peace.

Such a man can look forward to the *resurrection* and the judgment, and yet not be greatly moved. He can see with his mind's eye the great white throne—the assembled world—the open books—the listening angels—the Judge Himself—and yet feel peace.

Such a man can think of *eternity,* and yet not be greatly moved. He can imagine a never-ending existence in the presence of God and of the Lamb, a perpetual communion—and yet feel peace.

I know of no happiness compared to that which this peace affords. A calm sea after a storm, a blue sky after a black thunder cloud—health after sickness—light after darkness—rest after toil—all, all are beautiful and pleasant things. But none, none of them all can give more than a feeble idea of the comfort which those enjoy who have been brought into the state of peace with God. It is "a peace which passes all understanding." (Phil. 4:7.)

It is *the lack* of this very peace which makes many in the world unhappy. Thousands have everything that is thought able to give pleasure, and yet are never satisfied. Their hearts are always aching. There is a constant sense of emptiness within. And what is the secret of all this? They have no peace with God.

It is *the desire* of this very peace which makes many a heathen do much in his idolatrous religion. Hundreds of them have been seen to mortify their bodies, and vex their own flesh in the service of some wretched image which their own hands had made. And why? Because they hungered after peace with God.

It is *the possession* of this very peace on which the value of a man's religion depends. Without it there may be everything to please the eye, and gratify the ear—forms, ceremonies, services, and sacraments—and yet no good done to the soul. The grand question that should try all is the state of a man's conscience. Is it at peace? *Has he peace with God?*

This is the very peace about which I address every reader of these pages this day. Have you got it? Do you feel it? Is it your own?

If you have it, you are truly *rich*. You have that which will endure forever. You have treasure which you will not lose when you die and leave the world. You will carry it with you beyond the grave. You will have it and enjoy it to all eternity. Silver and gold you may have none. The praise of man you may never enjoy. But you have that which is far better than either, if you have the peace of God.

If you don't have this peace with God, you are truly *poor*. You have nothing which will last—nothing which will wear—nothing which you

can carry with you when your turn comes to die. Naked you came into this world, and naked in every sense you will go forth. Your body may be carried to the grave with pomp and ceremony. A solemn service may be read over your coffin. A marble monument may be put up in your honor. But after all it will be but a pauper's funeral, if you die without peace with God.

II. Let me show you, in the next place, **the FOUNTAIN from which true peace is drawn. *That fountain is justification.***

The peace of the true Christian is not a vague, dreamy feeling, without reason and without foundation. He can show cause for it. He builds upon solid ground. He has peace with God, because he is justified. Without justification it is impossible to have real peace with God. Conscience forbids it. Sin is a mountain between a man and God, and must be taken away. The sense of guilt lies heavy on the heart, and must be removed. Unpardoned sin will murder peace. The true Christian knows all this well. His peace arises from a consciousness of his sins being forgiven, and his guilt being put away. His house is not built on sandy ground. His well is not a broken cistern, which can hold no water. He has peace with God, because he is justified.

He is justified, and his **sins are *forgiven***. However many, and however great, they are cleansed away, pardoned, and wiped out. They are blotted out of the book of God's remembrance. They are sunk into the depths of the sea. They are cast behind God's back. They are searched for and not found. They are remembered no more. Though they may have been like scarlet, they are become white as snow; though they may have been red like crimson, they are as wool. And so he has peace.

He is justified and ***counted righteous* in God's sight**. The Father sees no spot in him, and reckons him innocent. He is clothed in a robe of perfect righteousness, and may sit down by the side of a holy God without feeling ashamed. The holy law of God, which touches the thoughts and intents of men's hearts, cannot condemn him. The devil, "the accuser of the brethren," can lay nothing to his charge, to prevent his full acquittal. And so he has peace.

Is he not naturally **a poor, weak, erring, defective *sinner?*** He is! None knows that better than he does himself. But notwithstanding this, he is reckoned complete, perfect, and faultless before God, for he is justified!

Is he not naturally **a *debtor?*** He is! None feels that more deeply than he does himself. He owes ten thousand talents, and has nothing of his own to pay. But his debts are all paid, settled, and crossed out forever, for he is justified!

Is he not naturally **liable to the curse of a *broken law?*** He is! None would confess that more readily than he would himself. But the demands of the law have been fully satisfied—the claims of justice have been met to the last tittle, and he is justified!

Does he not naturally ***deserve punishment?*** He does! None would acknowledge that more fully than he would himself. But the punishment has been borne. The wrath of God against sin has been made manifest. Yet he has escaped, and is justified!

Does anyone who is reading this paper know anything of all this? Are you justified? Do you feel as if you were pardoned, forgiven, and accepted before God? Can you draw near to Him with boldness, and say, "You are my Father and my Friend, and I am Your reconciled child"? Oh, believe me, you will never taste true peace until you are *justified!*

Where are your sins? Are they removed and taken away from off your soul? Have they been reckoned for, and accounted for, in God's presence? Oh, be very sure these questions are of the most solemn importance! A peace of conscience not built on justification, is a perilous dream. From such a false peace the Lord deliver you!

Go with me in imagination to some of our great London hospitals. Stand with me there by the bedside of some poor creature in the last stage of an incurable disease. He lies quiet perhaps, and makes no struggle. He does not complain of pain perhaps, and does not appear to feel it. He sleeps, and is still. His eyes are closed. His head reclines on his pillow. He smiles faintly, and mutters something. He is dreaming of home, and his mother, and his youth. His thoughts are far away. But is this health? Oh, no—no! It is only the effect of opiates. Nothing can be done for him. He is dying daily. The only object is to lessen his pain. His quiet is an unnatural quiet. His sleep is an unhealthy sleep. You see in that man's case a vivid likeness of *peace without justification*. It is a hollow, deceptive, unhealthy thing. Its end is death!

Go with me in imagination to some lunatic asylum. Let us visit some case of incurable insanity. We shall probably find someone who imagines that he is rich and noble, or a king. See how he will take the straw from off the ground, twist it round his head, and call it a crown. Mark how he will pick up stones and gravel, and call them diamonds and pearls. Hear how he will laugh, and sing, and appear to be happy in his delusions. But is this happiness? Oh, no! We know it is only the result of ignorant insanity. You see in that man's case another likeness of *peace built on fancy, and not on justification*. It is a senseless, baseless thing. It has neither root nor life.

Settle it in your mind that there can be no peace with God, unless we feel that we are justified. *We must know what has become of our sins.* We must have a reasonable hope that they are forgiven, and put away. We must have the witness of our conscience that we are reckoned not guilty before God. Without this it is vain to talk of peace with God. We have nothing but the deception and imitation of it. "There is no peace, says my God, to the wicked." (Isa. 57:21.)

Did you ever hear the sound of the trumpets which are blown before the judges, as they come into a city to open the Courts? Did you ever reflect how different are the feelings which these trumpets awaken in the minds of different people? The innocent man, who has no cause to be tried, hears them unmoved. They proclaim no terrors to him. He listens and looks on quietly, and is not afraid. But often there is some poor wretch, waiting his trial in a silent cell, to whom those trumpets are a knell of despair. They warn him that the day of trial is at hand. Yet a little time and he will stand at the bar of justice, and hear witness after witness telling the story of his misdeeds. Yet a little time, and all will be over—the trial, the verdict, and the sentence—and there will remain nothing for him but punishment and disgrace. No wonder the prisoner's heart beats quickly, when he hears that trumpet's sound!

There is a day fast coming when all who are *not justified* shall despair in like manner. The voice of the archangel and the trumpet of God shall scatter to the winds the false peace which now buoys up many a soul. The day of judgment shall convince thousands of self-

willed people too late, that it needs something more than a few beautiful ideas about "God's love and mercy," to reconcile a man to his Maker, and to deliver his guilty soul from hell. No hope shall stand in that solemn day but the hope of the justified man. No peace shall prove solid, substantial, and unbroken—but the peace which is built on *justification*.

Is this peace your own? Rest not, rest not, if you love life, until you know and feel that you are a justified man. Think not that this is a mere matter of names and words. Flatter not yourself with the idea that justification is an "abstruse and difficult subject," and that you may get to heaven well enough without knowing anything about it. Make up your mind to the great truth that there can be no heaven without peace with God—and no peace with God without justification. And then give your soul no rest until you are a **justified man**.

III. Let me show you, in the third place, **the ROCK from which justification and peace with God flow.** *That rock is Christ.* The true Christian is not justified because of any goodness of his own. His peace is not to be traced up to any work that he has done. It is not purchased by his prayers and regularity, his repentance and his amendment, his morality and his charity. All these are utterly unable to justify him. In themselves they are defective in many things and need a large forgiveness. And as to justifying him, such a thing is not to be named. Tried by the perfect standard of God's law the best of Christians is nothing better than a justified sinner, a pardoned criminal. As to merit, worthiness, desert, or claim upon God's mercy—he has none. Peace built on any such foundations as these is utterly worthless. The man who rests upon them is miserably deceived.

Never were truer words put on paper than those which Richard Hooker penned on this subject 280 years ago. Let those who would like to know what English clergymen thought in olden times, mark well what he says. "If God would make us an offer thus large—Search all the generations of people since the fall of your father Adam, and find *one man,* who has done *any one action,* which has past from him pure, without any stain or blemish at all—and for that one man's one only action, neither man nor angel shall find the torments which are prepared for both—do you think this ransom, to deliver man and angels, would be found among the sons of men? The best things we do have something in them to be pardoned. How then can we do anything meritorious and worthy to be rewarded?" To these words I desire entirely to subscribe. I believe that no man can be justified by his works before God in the slightest possible degree. Before man he may be justified—his works may evidence the reality of his Christianity. Before God he cannot be justified by anything that he can do—he will be always defective, always imperfect, always short-coming, always far below the mark, so long as he lives. It is not by works of his own that anyone ever has peace and is a justified man.

But how then is a true Christian justified? What is the secret of that peace and sense of pardon which he enjoys? How can we understand a Holy God dealing with a sinful man—as with one innocent, and reckoning him righteous notwithstanding his many sins?

The answer to all these questions is short and simple. The true Christian is counted righteous for the sake of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. He is justified because of the death and atonement of Christ. He has peace because "Christ died for his sins according to the Scriptures." This is the key that unlocks the mighty mystery. Here the great problem is solved, how God can be just and yet justify the ungodly. The life and death of the Lord Jesus explain all. "He is our peace." (1 Cor. 15:3; Ephes. 2:14.)

Christ has *stood in the place* of the true Christian. He has become his Surety and his Substitute. He undertook to bear all that was to be borne, and to do all that was to be done—and what He undertook He performed. Hence the true Christian is a justified man. (Isaiah 53:6.)

Christ has *suffered for sins,* the "just for the unjust." He has endured our punishment in His own body on the cross. He has allowed the wrath of God, which we deserved, to fall on His own head. Hence the true Christian is a justified man. (1 Pet. 3:1.8.)

Christ has *paid the debt* the Christian owed, by His own blood. He has reckoned for it, and discharged it to the uttermost farthing by His own death. God is a just God, and will not require his debts to be paid twice over. Hence the true Christian is a justified man. (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet 1:18, 19.)

Christ has *obeyed the law* of God perfectly. The devil, the Prince of this world, could find no fault in Him. By so fulfilling it He brought in an everlasting righteousness, in which all His people are clothed in the sight of God. Hence the true Christian is a justified man. (Dan 9:24; Rom 10:4.)

Christ, in one word, has lived for the true Christian. Christ has died for him. Christ has gone to the grave for him. Christ has risen again for him. Christ has ascended up on high for him, and gone into heaven to intercede for his soul. Christ has done all, paid all, suffered all that was needful for his redemption. Hence arises the true Christian's justification—hence his peace. In himself there is nothing but sin—but in Christ he has all things that his soul can require. (Coloss. 2:3; 3:11)

Who can tell the blessedness of the exchange which takes place between the true Christian and the Lord Jesus Christ! Christ's righteousness is placed upon him—and his sins are placed upon Christ. Christ has been reckoned a sinner for his sake—and now he is reckoned innocent for Christ's sake. Christ has been condemned for his sake though there was no fault in Him—and now he is acquitted for Christ's sake, though he is covered with sins, faults, and short-comings. Here is wisdom indeed! God can now be just and yet pardon the ungodly. Man can feel that he is a sinner, and yet have a good hope of heaven and feel peace within. Who among us could have imagined such a thing? Who ought not to admire it when he hears it? (2 Cor 5:21.)

We read in British history of a Lord Nithsdale who was sentenced to death for a great political crime. He was closely confined in prison after his trial. The day of his execution was fixed. There seemed no chance of escape. And yet before the sentence was carried into effect, he contrived to escape through the skill and affection of his wife. She visited him in prison, and exchanged clothes with him. Dressed in his wife's clothes he walked out of prison and escaped, and neither guards nor keepers detected him, while his wife remained behind in his place. In short, she risked her own life to save the life of her husband. Who would not admire the skill and the love of such a wife as this?

But we read in Gospel history of a display of love, compared to which the love of Lady Nithsdale is nothing. We read of Jesus, the Son of God, coming down to a world of sinners, who neither cared for Him before He came, nor honored Him when He appeared. We

read of Him going down to the prison-house, and submitting to be bound, that we the poor prisoners might be able to go free. We read of Him becoming obedient to death—and that the death of the cross, that we the unworthy children of Adam might have a door opened to life everlasting. We read of Him being content to bear our sins and carry our transgressions, that we might wear His righteousness, and walk in the light and liberty of the Sons of God. (Phil. 2:8.)

This may well be called a "love that passes knowledge!" In no way could free grace ever have shone so brightly as in the way of *justification by Christ*. (Ephes. 3:19.)

This is *the old way* by which alone the children of Adam, who have been justified from the beginning of the world, have found their peace. From Abel downwards, no man or woman has ever had one drop of mercy—except through Christ. To Him every altar that was raised before the time of Moses was intended to point. To Him every sacrifice and ordinance of the Jewish law was meant to direct the children of Israel. Of Him all the prophets testified. In a word, if you lose sight of justification by Christ, a large part of the Old Testament Scripture will become an unmeaning tangled maze.

This, above all, is the way of justification which exactly *meets the needs and requirements of human nature*. There is a conscience left in man, although he is a fallen being. There is a dim sense of his own need, which it his better moments will make itself heard, and which nothing but Christ can satisfy. So long as his conscience is not hungry, any religious toy will satisfy a man's soul and keep him quiet. But once let his conscience become hungry, and nothing will quiet him but real spiritual food—no food but Christ.

There is something within a man when his conscience is really awake, which whispers, *"There must be a price paid for my soul—or no peace."* At once the Gospel meets him with Christ. Christ has already paid a ransom for his redemption. Christ has given Himself for him. Christ has redeemed him from the curse of the law, being made a curse for him. (Gal. 2:20; 3:13.)

There is something within a man, when his conscience is really awake, which whispers, *"I must have some righteousness or title to heaven—or no peace."* At once the Gospel meets him with Christ. He has brought in an everlasting righteousness. He is the end of the law for righteousness. His name is called the Lord our righteousness. God has made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. (2 Cor. 5:21; Rom. 10:4; Jer. 23:6.)

There is something within a man, when his conscience is really awake, which whispers, *"There must be punishment and suffering because of my sins—or no peace."* At once the Gospel meets him with Christ. Christ has suffered for sin, the just for the unjust, to bring him to God. He bore our sins in His own body on the tree. By His stripes we are healed. (1 Peter 2:24; 3:18.)

There is something within a man, when his conscience is really awake, which whispers, *"I must have a priest for my soul—or no peace."* At once the Gospel meets him with Christ. Christ is sealed and appointed by God the Father to be the Mediator between Himself and man. He is the ordained Advocate for sinners. He is the accredited Counselor and Physician of sick souls. He is the great High Priest, the Almighty Absolver, the Gracious Confessor of heavy-laden sinners. (1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 8:1.)

I know there are thousands of professing Christians who see no peculiar beauty in this doctrine of justification by Christ. Their hearts are buried in the things of the world. Their consciences are palsied, benumbed, and speechless. But whenever a man's conscience begins really to feel and speak, he will see something in Christ's atonement and priestly office which he never saw before. Light does not suit the eye nor music the ear, more perfectly than Christ suits the real needs of a sinful soul. Hundreds can testify that the experience of a converted heathen in the island of Raiatea in the South Pacific Ocean has been exactly their own. "I saw," he said, "an immense mountain, with precipitous sides, up which I endeavored to climb—but when I had attained a considerable height, I lost my hold and fell to the bottom. Exhausted with perplexity and fatigue, I went to a distance and sat down to weep, and while weeping, I saw a drop of blood fall upon that mountain, and in a moment it was dissolved." He was asked to explain what all this meant. "That mountain," he said, "was my sins, and that drop which fell upon it, was one drop of the precious blood of Jesus, by which the mountain of my guilt was melted away." [*William's South Sea Missions.*]

This is the one true way of peace—justification by Christ. Beware lest any turn you out of this way and lead you into any of the false doctrines of the Church of Rome. Alas, it is amazing to see how that false Church has built a house of error near by the house of truth! Hold fast the truth of God about justification, and be not deceived. Listen not to anything you may hear about other mediators and helpers to peace. Remember there is no *mediator* but one—Jesus Christ. Remember there is no *purgatory* for sinners but one—the blood of Christ. Remember there is no *sacrifice* for sin but one—the sacrifice once made on the cross. Remember there are no *works* that can merit anything—but the work of Christ. Remember there is no *priest* who can truly absolve—but Christ. Stand fast here, and be on your guard. Give not the glory due to Christ, to another.

What do you know of Christ? I doubt not you have heard of Him by the hearing of the ear, and repeated His name in a creed. You are acquainted perhaps with the story of His life and death. But what experimental knowledge have you of Him? What practical use do you make of Him? What dealings and transactions have there been between your soul and Him?

Oh, believe me, there is *no peace with God except through Christ!* Peace is His peculiar gift. Peace is that legacy which He alone had power to leave behind Him when He left the world. All other peace beside this, is a mockery and a delusion. When hunger can be relieved without food, and thirst quenched without drink, and weariness removed without rest—then, and not until then, will people find peace without Christ.

Now, is this peace your own? Bought by Christ with His own blood, offered by Christ freely to all who are willing to receive it—is this peace your own? Oh, rest not—rest not until you can give a satisfactory answer to my question, have you true peace with God?

IV. Let me show you, in the last place, ***the HAND by which the privilege of peace is received—faith.***

I ask the special attention of all who read these pages to this part of our subject. There is scarcely any point in Christianity so important as the means by which Christ, justification, and peace, become the property of a man's soul. Many, I fear, would go with me so far as I have gone in this paper—but would part company here. Let us endeavor to lay hold firmly on the truth.

The means by which a man obtains an interest in Christ and all His benefits is *simple faith*. There is but one thing needful in order to be justified by His blood, and have peace with God. That one thing is to believe on Him. This is the peculiar mark of a true Christian. He believes on the Lord Jesus for his salvation. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." "Whoever believes in Him shall not perish—but have eternal life." (Acts 16:31; John 3:16.)

Without this faith it is *impossible to be saved.* A man may be moral, amiable, good-natured, and respectable. But if he does not believe on Christ, he has no pardon, no justification, no title to heaven. "He who believes not, is condemned already." "He who believes not the Son shall not see life—but the wrath of God abides on him." "He who believes not, shall be damned." (John 3:18, 36; Mark 16:16.)

Beside this faith *nothing whatever is needed for a man's justification.* Beyond doubt, repentance, holiness, love, humility, prayerfulness—will always be seen in the justified man. But they do not in the smallest degree justify him in the sight of God. Nothing joins a man to Christ—nothing justifies—but simple faith. "To him who works not—but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." "We conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." (Rom. 4:5; 3:28.)

Having this faith, a man *is at once completely justified.* His sins are at once removed. His iniquities are at once put away. The very hour that he believes he is reckoned by God entirely pardoned, forgiven, and a righteous man. His justification is not a future privilege, to be obtained after a long time and great pains. It is an immediate present possession. Jesus says, "He who believes on Me has everlasting life." Paul says, "By Him all who believe are justified from all things." (John 6:47; Acts 13:39.)

I need hardly say that it is of the utmost importance to have clear views about **the nature of true SAVING FAITH**. It is constantly spoken of as the distinguishing characteristic of New Testament Christians. They are called "believers." In the single Gospel of John, "believing" is mentioned eighty or ninety times. There is hardly any subject about which so many mistakes are made. There is none about which mistakes are so injurious to the soul. The darkness of many a sincere inquirer may be traced up to confused views about faith. Let us try to get a distinct idea of its real nature.

True saving faith is *not the possession of everybody.* The opinion that all who are called Christians are, as a matter of course, believers, is a most mischievous delusion. A man may be baptized, like Simon Magus, and yet have "no part or lot" in Christ. The visible Church contains unbelievers as well as believers. "All people have not faith." (2 Thess. 3:2.)

True saving faith is *not a mere matter of feeling.* A man may have many good feelings and desires in his mind towards Christ, and yet they may all prove as temporary and short-lived as the morning cloud and the early dew. Many are like the stony-ground hearers, and "receive the word with joy." Many will say under momentary excitement, "I will follow You wherever You go," and yet return to the world. (Matt. 8:19; 13:20.)

True saving faith is *not a bare assent of the intellect* to the fact that Christ died for sinners. This is not a jot better than the faith of devils. They know who Jesus is. "They believe," and they do more, "they tremble." (James 2:19.)

True saving faith is *an act of the whole inner man.* It is an act of the head, heart, and will, all united and combined. It is an act of the soul, in which—seeing his own guilt, danger, and hopelessness—and seeing at the same time Christ offering to save him—a man ventures on Christ—flees to Christ—receives Christ as his only hope, and becomes a willing dependant on Him for salvation. It is an act which becomes at once the parent of a habit. He who has it may not always be equally sensible of his own faith; but in the main he lives by faith, and walks by faith.

True faith has *nothing whatever of merit* about it, and in the highest sense cannot be called "a work." It is but laying hold of a Savior's hand, leaning on a husband's arm, and receiving a physician's medicine. It brings with it nothing to Christ, but a sinful man's soul. It gives nothing, contributes nothing, pays nothing, performs nothing. It only receives, takes, accepts, grasps, and embraces the glorious gift of justification which Christ bestows, and by renewed daily acts enjoys that gift.

Of all Christian graces, faith is the most important. Of all, it is the simplest in reality. Of all, it is the most difficult to make people understand in practice. The mistakes into which people fall about it are endless. Some who have no faith never doubt for a moment that they are believers. Others, who have real faith, can never be persuaded that they are believers at all. But nearly every mistake about faith may be traced up to the old root of natural pride. People will persist in sticking to the idea that they are to pay something of their own in order to be saved. As to a faith which consists in receiving only, and paying nothing at all, it seems as if they could not understand it.

Saving faith is the ***hand*** of the soul. The sinner is like a drowning man at the point of sinking. He sees the Lord Jesus Christ holding out help to him. He grasps it and is saved. This is faith. (Heb. 6:18.)

Saving faith is the ***eye*** of the soul. The sinner is like the Israelite bitten by the fiery serpent in the wilderness, and at the point of death. The Lord Jesus Christ is offered to him as the brazen serpent, set up for his cure. He looks and is healed. This is faith. (John 3:14, 15.)

Saving faith is the ***mouth*** of the soul. The sinner is starving for lack of food, and sick of a severe disease. The Lord Jesus Christ is set before him as the bread of life, and the universal medicine. He receives it, and is made well and strong. This is faith. (John 6:35.)

Saving faith is the ***foot*** of the soul. The sinner is pursued by a deadly enemy, and is in fear of being overtaken. The Lord Jesus Christ is put before him as a strong tower, a hiding place, and a refuge. He runs into it and is safe. This is faith. (Prov. 18:10.)

If you love life cling with a fast hold to the doctrine of justification by faith. If you love inward peace, let your views of faith be very simple. Honor every part of the Christian religion. Contend to the death for the necessity of holiness. Use diligently and reverently every appointed means of grace—but do not give to these things the office of *justifying* your soul in the slightest degree. If you would have peace, and keep peace, remember that faith alone, justifies, and that not as a meritorious work—but as the act that joins the soul to Christ. Believe me, the crown and glory of the Gospel is justification by faith, without the deeds of the law.

No doctrine can be imagined *so* ***beautifully simple*** as justification by faith. It is not a dark mysterious truth, intelligible to none but the great, the rich, and the learned. It places eternal life within the reach of the most unlearned; and the poorest in the land. It must

be of God.

No doctrine can be imagined *so* ***glorifying to God***. It honors all His attributes, His justice, mercy, and holiness. It gives the whole credit of the sinner's salvation to the Savior He has appointed. It honors the Son, and so honors the Father who sent Him. (John 5:25.) It gives man no partnership in his redemption—but makes salvation to be wholly of the Lord. It must be of God.

No doctrine can be imagined *so* ***calculated to put man in his right place***. It shows him his own sinfulness, and weakness, and inability to save his soul by his own works. It leaves him without excuse if he is not saved at last. It offers to him peace and pardon "without money and without price." It must be of God. (Isa. 55:1.)

No doctrine can be imagined *so* ***comforting to a brokenhearted and penitent sinner***. It brings to such an one glad tidings. It shows him that there is hope even for him. It tells him, though he is a great sinner, there is ready for him a great Savior; and though he cannot justify himself, God can and will justify him for the sake of Christ. It must be of God.

No doctrine can be imagined *so* ***satisfying*** *to a true Christian*. It supplies him with a solid ground of comfort—the finished work of Christ. If anything was left for the Christian to do, where would his comfort be? He would never know that he had done enough, and was really safe. But the doctrine that Christ undertakes all, and that we have only to believe and receive peace, meets every fear. It must be of God.

No doctrine can be imagined *so* ***sanctifying***. It draws people by the strongest of all cords—the cord of love. It makes them feel they are debtors, and in gratitude bound to love much, when much has been forgiven. Preaching up works never produces such fruit—as preaching them down. Exalting man's goodness and merits never makes people so holy as exalting Christ. The fiercest lunatics at Paris became gentle, mild, and obedient, when Abbe Pinel gave them liberty and hope. **The free grace of Christ will produce far greater effects on men's lives than the sternest commands of law.** Surely the doctrine must be of God.

No doctrine can be imagined *so* ***strengthening*** *to the hands of a minister*. It enables him to come to the vilest of people, and say, "There is a door of hope even for you!" It enables him to feel, "While life lasts there are no incurable cases among the souls under my charge." Many a minister by the use of this doctrine can say of souls, "I found them in the state of **nature**. I beheld them pass into the state of **grace**. I watched them moving into the state of **glory**." Truly this doctrine must be of God.

No doctrine can be imagined that ***wears so well***. It suits people when they first begin, like the Philippian jailer, crying, "What shall I do to be saved?" It suits them when they fight in the forefront of the battle. Like the apostle Paul, they say, "The life that I live, I live by the faith of the Son of God." (Gal. 2:20.) It suits them when they die, as it did Stephen when he cried, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." (Acts 7:59.) Yes—many a one has opposed the doctrine fiercely while he lived, and yet on his death-bed has gladly embraced justification by faith, and departed saying that *"he trusted in nothing but Christ."* It must be of God.

Have you this faith? Do you know anything of simple child-like confidence in Jesus? Do you know what it is to rest your soul's hopes wholly on Christ? Oh, remember that where there is no **faith**, there is no saving interest in Christ. Where there is no **saving interest** in Christ, there is no justification. Where there is no **justification**, there can be no peace with God. Where there is no **peace with God**, there is no **heaven**! And what then? There remains nothing but hell.

And now, let me commend the solemn matters we have been considering to the serious and prayerful attention of all who read this paper. I invite you to begin by meditating calmly on peace with God—on justification—on Christ—on faith. These are not mere speculative subjects, fit for none but retired students. They lie at the very roots of Christianity. They are bound up with life eternal. Bear with me for a few moments, while I add a few words in order to bring them home more closely to your heart and conscience.

1. Let me, then, for one thing, request every reader of this paper to put ***a plain QUESTION*** to himself.

Have you peace with God? You have heard of it. You have read of it. You know there is such a thing. You know where it is to be found. But do you possess it yourself? Is it yet your own? Oh, deal honestly with yourself, and do not evade my question! *Have you peace with God?*

I do not ask whether you think it an excellent thing, and hope to procure it at some future time before you die. I want to know about your state now. Today, while it is called today, I ask you to deal honestly with my question. *Have you peace with God?*

Do not, I beseech you, allow any public events to make you put off the consideration of your own spiritual welfare. The wars and contentions of nations will never cease. The strife of political parties will never end. But after all, a hundred years hence these very things will seem of little importance to you. The question I am asking will seem a thousand times more important. You may possibly be saying then, too late, *"Oh, that I had thought more about peace with God!"*

May the question ring in your ears, and never leave you until you can give it a satisfactory answer! May the Spirit of God so apply it to your heart that you may be able to say boldly, before you die, "Being justified by faith, I have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

2. In the next place, let me offer ***a solemn WARNING*** to every reader of this paper who knows that he has not peace with God.

You have not peace with God! Consider for a moment how fearfully great is your ***danger!*** You and God are not friends. The wrath of God abides on you. God is angry with you every day. Your ways, your words, your thoughts, your actions, are a continual offence to Him. They are all unpardoned and unforgiven. They cover you from head to foot. They provoke Him every day to cut you off. The sword that the reveler of old saw hanging over his head by a single hair, is but a faint emblem of the danger of your soul. **There is but a step between you and hell.**

You have not peace with God! Consider for a moment how fearfully great is your ***folly!*** There sits at the right hand of God a mighty Savior able and willing to give you peace, and you do not seek Him. For ten, twenty, thirty, and perhaps forty years He has called to you, and you have refused His counsel. He has cried, "Come to Me," and you have practically replied, "I will not." He has said, "My ways are ways of pleasantness," and you have constantly said, "I like my own sinful ways far better."

And after all, for what have you refused Christ? For worldly riches, which cannot heal a broken heart; for worldly business, which you must one day leave; for worldly pleasures, which do not really satisfy; for these things, and such as these, you have refused Christ! Is this wisdom! is this fairness, is this kindness to your soul?

I do beseech you to consider your ways. I mourn over your present condition with especial sorrow. I grieve to think how many are within a hair's breadth of some crushing affliction, and yet utterly unprepared to meet it. Gladly would I draw near to everyone, and cry in his ear, "Seek Christ! Seek Christ, that you may have peace within and a present help in trouble." Gladly would I persuade every anxious parent and wife and child to become acquainted with Him, who is a brother born for adversity, and the Prince of peace—a friend who never fails nor forsakes, and a husband who never dies.

3. Let me, in the next place, offer ***an affectionate ENTREATY*** to all who want peace and know not where to find it.

You want peace! Then seek it without delay from Him who alone is able to give it—Christ Jesus the Lord. Go to Him in humble prayer, and ask Him to fulfill His own promises and look graciously on your soul. Tell Him you have read His compassionate invitation to the "laboring and heavy-laden." Tell Him that this is the plight of your soul, and implore Him to give you rest. Do this, and do it without delay.

Seek Christ Himself, and *do not stop short of personal dealings with Him*. Rest not in regular attendance on Christ's ordinances. Be not content with becoming a communicant, and receiving the Lord's supper. Think not to find solid peace in this way. You must see the King's face, and be touched by the golden scepter. You must speak to the Physician, and open your whole case to Him. You must be closeted with the Advocate, and keep nothing back from Him. Oh, remember this! Many are shipwrecked just outside the harbor. They stop short in means and ordinances, and never go completely to Christ. "Whoever drinks of this water shall thirst again." (John 4:13.) Christ alone can satisfy the soul.

Seek Christ, and *wait for nothing*. Wait not until you feel you have repented enough. Wait not until your knowledge is increased. Wait not until you have been sufficiently humbled because of your sins. Wait not until you have no raveled tangle of doubts and darkness and unbelief all over your heart. Seek Christ just as you are. You will never be better by keeping away from Him. From the bottom of my heart I subscribe to old Traill's opinion, *"It is impossible that people should believe in Christ too soon."* Alas, it is not humility—but pride and ignorance that make so many anxious souls hang back from closing with Jesus. They forget that the more sick a man is, the more need he has of the physician. The more bad a man feels his heart, the more readily and speedily ought he to flee to Christ.

Seek Christ, and *do not fancy you must sit still*. Let not Satan tempt you to suppose that you must wait in a state of passive inaction, and not strive to lay hold upon Jesus. How you can lay hold upon Him I do not pretend to explain. But I am certain that it is better to struggle towards Christ and strive to lay hold, than to sit still with our arms folded in sin and unbelief. Better

4. Let me, in the next place, offer ***some ENCOURAGEMENT*** to those who have good reason to hope they have peace with God—but are troubled by doubts and fears.

You have doubts and fears! But what do you expect? What would you have? Your soul is married to a body full of weakness, passions, and infirmities. You live in a world that lies in wickedness, a world in which the great majority do not love Christ. You are constantly liable to the temptations of the devil. That busy enemy, if he cannot shut you out of heaven, will try hard to make your journey uncomfortable. Surely all these things ought to be considered.

I say to every believer, that so far from being surprised that you have doubts and fears; I would suspect the reality of your peace if you had none. I think little of that grace which is accompanied by no inward conflict. There is seldom life in the heart when all is still, quiet, and in one way of thinking. Believe me, a true Christian may be known by his *warfare* as well as by his peace. These very doubts and fears which now distress you are tokens of good. They satisfy me that you have really got something which you are afraid to lose.

Beware that you do not help Satan by becoming an unjust accuser of yourself, and an unbeliever in the reality of God's work of grace. I advise you to pray for more knowledge of your own heart, of the fullness of Jesus, and of the devices of the devil. Let doubts and fears drive you to the throne of grace, stir you up to more prayer, send you more frequently to Christ. But do not let doubts and fears rob you of your peace. Believe me, you must be content to go to heaven as a sinner saved by grace. And you must not be surprised to find daily proof that you really are a sinner so long as you live.

5. Let me, in the last place, offer some ***counsel*** to all who have peace with God, and desire to keep up a lively sense of it.

It must never be forgotten that a believer's sense of his own justification and acceptance with God admits of many degrees and variations. At one time it may be bright and clear; at another dull and dim. At one time it may be high and full, like the flood tide; at another low, like the ebb. **Our justification is a fixed, changeless, immovable thing. But our sense of justification is liable to many changes.**

What then are the best means of preserving in a believer's heart that lively sense of justification which is so precious to the soul that knows it? I offer a few hints to believers. I lay no claim to infallibility in setting down these hints, for I am only a man. But such as they are I offer them.

(a) To keep up a lively sense of peace, there must be constant *looking to Jesus*. As the pilot keeps his eye on the mark by which he steers, so must we keep our eye on Christ.

(b) There must be constant *communion with Jesus*. We must use Him daily as our soul's Physician, and High Priest. There must be daily conference, daily confession, and daily absolution.

(c) There must be constant *watchfulness* against the enemies of your soul. He who would have peace must be always prepared for war.

(d) There must be constant ***following after holiness*** in every relation of life—in our tempers, in our tongues, abroad and at home. A small speck on the lens of a telescope is enough to prevent our seeing distant objects clearly. A little dust will soon make a watch go incorrectly.

(e) There must be a constant ***laboring after humility***. Pride goes before a fall. Self-confidence is often the mother of sloth, of hurried Bible-reading, and sleepy prayers. Peter first said he would never forsake his Lord, though all others did—then he slept when he should have prayed—then he denied Him three times, and only found wisdom after bitter weeping.

(f) There must be constant ***boldness in confessing*** **our Lord** before people. Those who honor Christ, Christ will honor with much of His company. When the disciples forsook our Lord they were wretched and miserable. When they confessed Him before the council, they were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit.

(g) There must be constant ***diligence about means of grace***. Here are the ways in which Jesus loves to walk. No disciple must expect to see much of his Master, who does not delight in public worship, Bible-reading, and private prayer.

(h) Lastly, there must be constant ***jealousy*** **over our own souls**, and frequent self-examination. We must be careful to distinguish between justification and sanctification. We must beware that we do not make a Christ of holiness.

I lay these hints before all believing readers. I might easily add to them. But I am sure they are among the first things to be attended to by true Christian believers, if they wish to keep up a lively sense of their own justification and acceptance with God.

I conclude all by expressing my heart's desire and prayer that all who read these pages may know what it is to have the peace of God which passes all understanding in their souls.

If you never had "peace" yet, may it be recorded in the book of God that this year you sought peace in Christ and found it!

If you have tasted "peace" already—may your sense of peace mightily increase!

OUR SOULS!

J. C. Ryle

"For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Mark 8:36

The saying of our Lord Jesus Christ, which stands at the head of this page, ought to ring in our ears like a trumpet-blast. It concerns our highest and best interests. It concerns OUR SOULS.

What a solemn question these words of Scripture contain! What a mighty sum of profit and loss they propound to us for calculation! Where is the accountant who could reckon it up? Where is the clever arithmetician who would not be baffled by that sum? "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

I wish to offer a few plain remarks, to enforce and illustrate the question which the Lord Jesus asks in the passage before us. I invite the serious attention of all who read this volume. May all who take it up feel more deeply than they ever yet felt, the value of an immortal soul! It is the first step toward heaven to find out the true worth of our souls. The first remark I have to make is this–

I. Every one of us has an undying soul.

I am not ashamed to begin my paper with these words. I dare say that they sound strange and foolish to some readers. I dare say that some will exclaim, "Who knows not such things as these? Who ever thinks of doubting that we have souls?" But I cannot forget that the world is just now fixing its attention on material things to a most extravagant extent. We live in an age of progress—an age of steam-engines and machinery, of locomotion and invention. We live in an age when the multitude are increasingly absorbed in earthly things—in railways, and docks, and mines, and commerce, and trade, and banks, and shops, and cotton, and corn, and iron, and gold. **We live in an age when there is a false glare on the things of time, and a great mist over the things of eternity.** In an age like this it is the bounden duty of the ministers of Christ to fall back upon first principles. Necessity is laid upon us. Woe is unto us, if we do not press home on men our Lord's question about the soul! Woe is unto us, if we do not cry aloud, "This present world is not all. The life that we now live in the flesh is not the only life. There is a life to come. We have souls!"

Let us establish it in our minds as a great fact, that we all carry within our bosoms something that will never die. This body of ours, which takes up so much of our thoughts and time, to warm it, dress it, feed it, and make it comfortable—this body alone is not all the man. It is but the lodging of a noble tenant, and that tenant is the immortal soul! The death which each of us has one day to die does not make an end of the man. All is not over when the last breath is drawn, and the doctor's last visit has been paid—when the coffin is screwed down, and the funeral preparations are made—when "ashes to ashes and dust to dust" has been pronounced over the grave—when our place in the world is filled up, and the gap made by our absence from society is no longer noticed. No—all is not over then! The spirit of man still lives on! Everyone has within him an undying soul!

I do not stop to prove this. It would be a mere waste of time. There is a **conscience** in all mankind, which is worth a thousand metaphysical arguments. There is a voice within, which speaks out loudly at times, and will be heard—a voice which tells us, whether we like it or not, that we have, every one of us, an undying soul. What though we cannot see our souls? Are there not millions of things in existence which we cannot see with the naked eye? Who that has looked through the telescope or microscope can doubt that this is the case?

What though we cannot *see* our souls? We can *feel* them! When we are alone, on the bed of sickness, and the world is shut out—when we watch by the death-bed of a friend—when we see those whom we love lowered into the grave—at times like these, who does not

know the feelings which come across men's minds? Who does not know that in hours like these, something rises in the heart, telling us that there is a life to come, and that all, from the highest to the lowest, have undying souls?

You may go all over the world, and take the evidence of every age and time. You will never receive but one answer on this subject. You will find some nations buried in degrading superstition, and mad after idols. You will find others sunk in the darkest ignorance, and utterly unacquainted with the true God. But you will not find a nation or people among whom there is not some consciousness that there is a life to come. The deserted temples of Egypt, Greece, and Rome, the Druid remains of our own native land, the splendid pagodas of Hindostan, the Fetish worship of Africa, the funeral ceremonies of the New Zealand chiefs, the conjurers' tents among the North American Indian tribes—all, all speak with the same voice, and tell the same story. Far down in the human heart, beneath the rubbish heaped up by the Fall, there is an inscription which nothing can efface—telling us that this world is not all, and that every one of us has an undying soul!

I do not stop to prove that men have souls, but I do ask every reader of this paper to keep it ever before his mind. Perhaps your lot is cast in the midst of some busy city. You see around you an endless struggle for temporal things. Hurry, bustle, and business hem you in on every side. I can well believe you are sometimes tempted to think that this world is everything, and the body is all that is worth caring for. But resist the temptation, and cast it behind you. Say to yourself every morning when you rise, and every night when you lie down, "This world is passing away. The life that I now live is not all. There is something beside business, and money, and pleasure, and commerce, and trade. There is a life to come. I have an immortal soul!"

I do not stop to prove the point, but I do ask every reader to realize the dignity and responsibility of having a soul. Yes—realize the fact, that in your soul you have the greatest treasure which God has committed to your charge. Know that in your soul you have a pearl above all price, compared to which all earthly possessions are trifles light as air. The horse that wins the Derby or the Leger, attracts the attention of thousands—painters paint it, and engravers engrave it, and vast sums of money turn on its achievements. Yet the weakest infant in a working man's family, is far more important in God's sight than that horse. The spirit of the animal goes downwards; but that infant has an immortal soul.

The pictures at our great exhibitions are visited by admiring crowds—people gaze on them with wonder, and talk with rapture of the "immortal works" of Rubens, Titian, and other great masters. But there is no immortality about these things. The earth, and all its works shall be burned up! The little babe that cries in a garret, and knows nothing of fine art, shall outlive all those pictures, for it has a soul which shall never die! There shall be a time when the Pyramids and the Parthenon shall alike crumble to nothing—when Windsor Castle and Westminster Abbey shall be cast down and pass away—when the sun shall cease to shine, and the moon no more give her light. But the soul of the humblest laborer is of far more enduring substance. It shall survive the crash of an expiring universe, and live on to all eternity. Realize, I say once more, the responsibility and dignity of having a never-dying soul.

You may be poor in this world—but you have a soul. You may be sickly and weak in body—but you have a soul. You may not be a king, or a queen, or a duke, or an earl—yet you have a soul. The soul is the part of us which God chiefly regards. The soul is "the man." The soul which is in man is the most important thing about him.

I do not stop to prove that men have souls, but I do ask all men to live as if they believed it. Live as if you really believed that we were not sent into the world merely to spin cotton, and grow corn, and hoard up gold—but to "glorify God and to enjoy Him forever." Read your Bible, and become acquainted with its contents. Seek the Lord in prayer, and pour out your heart before Him. Go to a place of worship regularly, and hear the Gospel preached. And if any ask you the reason why—if wife, or child, or companion say, "What are you about?"—answer them boldly, like a man, and say, "I do these things because I have a soul." The second remark I have to make is this–

II. Anyone may LOSE his own soul.

This is a sorrowful portion of my subject. But it is one which I dare not, cannot pass by. I have no sympathy with those who prophesy nothing but peace, and keep back from men the awful fact, that they may lose their souls. I am one of those old-fashioned ministers who believe the *whole* Bible—and everything that it contains. I can find no Scriptural foundation for that smooth-spoken theology, which pleases so many in these days, and according to which everybody will get to heaven at last. I believe that there is a real devil. I believe that there is a real hell. I believe that it is not love to keep back from men that they may be lost. Love!—shall I call it? If you saw a brother drinking poison, would you be quiet? Love!—shall I call it? If you saw a blind man tottering towards a precipice, would you not cry out "Stop!" Away with such false notions of love! Let us not slander that blessed grace, by using its name in a false sense. It is the highest love to bring the whole truth before men. It is real charity to warn them plainly when they are in danger. It is love to impress upon them, that they may lose their own souls forever in hell.

Man has about him an amazing power for evil. Weak as we are in all that is good, we have a mighty power to do ourselves harm. You cannot save that soul of yours, my brother—remember that! You cannot make your own peace with God. You cannot wipe away a single sin. You cannot blot out one of the black records which stand in the book of God against you. You cannot change your own heart. **But there is one thing you can do—you can lose your own soul!**

But this is not all. Not only can we all lose our own souls, but we are all in **imminent peril** of doing it! Born in sin, and children of wrath, we have no natural desire to have our souls saved. Weak, corrupt, inclined to sin, we "call good evil, and evil good." Dark and blind, and dead in trespasses, we have no eyes to see the pit which yawns beneath our feet, and no sense of our guilt and danger. And yet our souls are all this time in awful peril!

If any one were to sail for America in a leaky ship, without compass, without water, without provisions, who does not see that there would be little chance of his crossing the Atlantic in safety? If you were to place the Kohinoor diamond in the hands of a little child, and bid him carry it from Tower Hill to Bristol, who does not perceive the doubtfulness of that diamond arriving safely at the end of the journey? Yet these are but faint images of the immense peril in which we stand by nature of losing our souls.

But some one may ask, **How can a man lose his soul?** There are many answers to that question. Just as there are many diseases which assault and hurt the body, so there are many evils which assault and injure the soul. Yet however numerous the ways in which

a man may lose his own soul, they may be classed under three general heads. Let me show briefly what they are.

For one thing, **you may *murder* your soul by running into OPEN SIN**, and serving lusts and pleasures. Adultery and fornication, drunkenness and reveling, dishonesty and lying, are all so many short-cuts to hell. "Let no man deceive you with vain words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the children of disobedience." (Ephes. 5:6.)

For another thing, **you may *poison* your own soul by taking up some FALSE RELIGION.** You may drug it with traditions of man's invention, and a round of ceremonies and observances which never came down from heaven. You may lull it to sleep with opiates which stupify the conscience, but do not heal the heart. Strychnine and arsenic will do their work quite as effectually as the pistol or sword, though with less noise. Let no man deceive you. "Beware of false prophets." When men commit their souls to blind leaders, both must fall into the ditch. A false religion is quite as ruinous as no religion at all!

For another thing, **you may *starve* your soul to death by trifling and INDECISION.** You may idle through life with a name upon the baptismal register, but not inscribed in the Lamb's Book of Life—with a form of godliness, but without the power. You may trifle on year after year, taking no interest in that which is good, content to sneer at the inconsistencies of professors, and flattering yourself because you are no bigot, or party man, or professor, it will be "all right" with your soul at last. "Let no man deceive you with vain words." Indecision is just as ruinous to the soul as a false religion or no religion at all. The stream of life can never stand still. Whether you are sleeping or waking, you are floating down that stream. You are coming nearer and nearer to the rapids. You will soon pass over the falls, and, if you die without a decided faith, be cast away for all eternity!

Such then are the three chief ways in which you can lose your soul. Does any one who is reading this paper know which of these ways he is taking? Search and look whether I have touched your own case. Find out whether or not you are losing your soul.

But does it take much effortto ruin a soul? Oh, no! It is a down-hill journey. There is nothing required at your hands. There is no need of exertion. You have only to sit still, and swim with the tide, to float down the stream, to go with the crowd—and by and by the time of mercy will be past for evermore! "Wide is the gate that leads to destruction!"

But are there many, who are losing their souls? Yes, indeed there are! Look not at the inscriptions and epitaphs on tombstones, if you would find the true answer to that question! As Dr. Watts says, they "flatter and lie."

All men are thought respectable and "good sort of people" as soon as they are dead. But look at the Word of God, and mark well what it says. The Lord Jesus Christ declares, "Strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leads unto life, and few there be that find it—broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat." (Matt. 7:13, 14.)

But who is responsiblefor the loss of our souls? No one but ourselves! Our blood will be upon our own heads. The blame will lie at our own door. We shall have nothing to plead at the last day, when we stand before the great white throne and the books are opened. When the King comes in to see His guests, and says, "Friend, how did you get in here, not having a wedding garment?" we shall be speechless. We shall have no excuse to plead for the loss of our souls.

But where does the soul go to when lost? There is only one solemn answer to that question. There is but one place to which it can go, and that is hell. There is no such thing as annihilation. The lost soul goes to that place where the worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched—where there is blackness and darkness, wretchedness and despair forever. Since it is not fit for heaven, it goes to hell -- the only place for which it is fit. "The wicked shall be turned into hell, with all the nations which forget God." "The end of those things is death!" (Rom. 6:21.)

Let me say plainly that we ministers are full of fears about many who profess and call themselves Christians. We fear lest they should lose at last their precious souls. We fear lest that arch-impostor, Satan, should cheat them out of salvation, and lead them captive at his will. We fear lest they should wake up in eternity, and find themselves lost forevermore! We fear, because we see so many living in sinful habits, so many resting in forms and ceremonies which God never commanded, so many trifling with all religion whatever—so many, in short, ruining their own souls! We see these things, and are afraid.

It is just because I feel that souls are in danger that I write this paper, and invite men to read it. If I thought there was no such place as hell I would not write as I do. If I thought that as a matter of course all people would go to heaven at last, I would be quiet and leave them alone. But I dare not do so. I see danger ahead, and I would sincerely warn every man to flee from the wrath to come. I see peril of shipwreck, and I would light a beacon and entreat every man to seek the harbor of safety. Do not despise my warning. Examine your own heart—find out whether you are in a way to be lost or saved. Search and see how matters stand between yourself and God—do not commit the enormous folly of losing your own soul. We live in an age of great temptation. The devil is going about and is very busy. The night is far spent. The time is short. Do not lose your own soul!

III. The loss of any man's soul is the heaviest loss which he can suffer.

I feel unable to set forth this point as I ought. No living man can show the full extent of the loss of the soul. No one can paint that loss in its true colors. No we shall never understand it until we have passed through the valley of the shadow of death, and wake up in the eternal world! Never until then shall we know the value of an immortal soul.

I might say that **nothing in the present life can make up for the loss of the soul.** You may have all the riches of the world—all the gold of Australia and of California, all the honors which your country can bestow upon you. You may be the owner of half a continent. You may be one whom kings delight to honor, and nations gaze upon with admiration. But all this time, if you are losing your soul, you are a poor man in the sight of God. Your honors are but for a few years. Your riches must be left at last. Naked you came we into the world, and naked must you go out. No light heart, no cheerful conscience, will you have in life, unless your soul is saved. Of all your money or broad acres, you will carry nothing with you when you die. A few feet of earth will suffice to cover that body of yours when life is over. And then, if your soul be lost, you will find yourself a pauper to all eternity. Verily it shall profit a man nothing to gain the whole world if he loses his own soul.

I might say that **when the soul is lost, it is a loss that cannot be retrieved.** Once lost, it is lost for evermore. The loss of property

may be retrieved in this world. The loss of health and character are sometimes reparable. But no man who has once drawn his last breath can ever retrieve his lost soul. Scripture reveals to us no purgatory beyond the grave. Scripture teaches us that, once lost, we are lost forever! Verily a man will find that there is nothing he can give to buy back and redeem his soul.

But I feel deeply that arguments like these fall far below the level of the subject. The time is not yet come when we shall fully realize what a soul is worth. We must look far forward. We must place ourselves in imagination in a different position from that which we now occupy, before we shall form a right estimate of the thing we are considering. The blind man cannot understand beautiful scenery. The deaf man cannot appreciate fine music. The living man cannot fully realize the amazing importance of a world to come.

Does any reader of this paper wish to have some faint idea of **the value of a soul?** Then go and measure it by the opinions **of dying people.** The solemnity of the closing scene strips off the tinsel and pretense of things, and makes men see them as they really are. What would men do then for their souls? I have seen something of this, as a Christian minister. Seldom, very seldom, have I found people careless, thoughtless, and indifferent about the world to come, in the hour of death. The man who can tell good stories, and sing good songs to merry companions, turns very grave when he begins to feel that life is leaving his body. The boasting infidel at such a season has often cast aside his infidelity. Men like Paine and Voltaire have often shown that their vaunted philosophy breaks down when the grave is in sight. Tell me not what a man thinks about the soul when he is in the fullness of health; tell me rather what he thinks when the world is sinking beneath him, and death, judgment, and eternity loom in sight. The great realities of our being will then demand attention, and must be considered. The value of the soul in the light of time is one thing, but seen in the light of eternity it is quite another. Never does living man know the value of the soul so well as when he is dying, and can keep the world no longer.

Does any one wish to have a still clearer idea of the soul's value? Then go and measure it by the opinions of **the dead.** Read in the sixteenth chapter of Luke the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. When the rich man awoke in hell and in torments, what did he say to Abraham? "Send Lazarus to my father's house—for I have five brethren—that he may testify to them—lest they also come to this place of torment." That rich man probably thought little or nothing of the souls of others while he lived upon the earth. Once dead and in the place of torment, he sees things in their true colors. Then he thinks of his brethren, and begins to care for their salvation. Then he cries, "Send Lazarus to my father's house. I have five brethren. Let him testify unto them." If that wonderful parable did nothing else, it would teach us what men think when they awake in the next world. It lifts a corner of the veil which hangs over the world to come, and gives us a glimpse of what dead men think of the value of the soul.

Does any one wish to have the clearest idea that can be given of the soul's value? Then go and measure it by **the price**which was paid for it 1800 years ago. What an enormous and countless price it was which was paid! No gold, no silver, no diamonds were found sufficient to provide redemption—no angel in heaven was able to bring a ransom. Nothing but the blood of Christ—nothing but the death of the eternal Son of God upon the cross, was found sufficient to buy for the soul deliverance from hell. Go to Calvary in spirit, and consider what took place there, when the Lord Jesus died. See the blessed Savior suffering on the cross. Mark what happens there when He dies. See how there was darkness for three hours over the face of the earth. The earth quakes. The rocks are torn apart. The graves are opened. Listen to His dying words—"My God, my God, why have you forsaken Me?" Then see in all that marvelous transaction something, which may give you an idea of the value of the soul. In that dreadful scene we witness payment of the only price which was found sufficient to redeem men's souls.

We shall all understand the value of the soul one day, if we do not understand it now. God grant that no one who reads this paper may understand it too late. A lunatic asylum is a pitiable sight. It wrings the heart to see in that gloomy building some man, who had once a princely fortune, but has squandered it, and brought himself to hopeless insanity by drunkenness. A shipwreck is a pitiable sight. It makes one melancholy to see some gallant vessel, which once "walked the water like a thing of life," stranded on a rocky shore, with a drowned crew and a scattered cargo lying round her on the beach. But of all sights that can affect the eye and grieve the heart, I know none so pitiable as the sight of a man ruining his own soul. No wonder that Jesus wept when He drew near unto Jerusalem for the last time. It is written, that "He beheld the city and wept over it!" (Luke 19:41.) *He* knew the value of souls, if the Scribes and Pharisees did not. We may learn from those tears of His, if from nothing else—the value of man's soul, and the amount of loss which he will sustain if that soul is cast away.

I charge every reader of this paper, while it is called today, to open his eyes to the worth of his soul. Rise to a sense of the awfulness of losing a soul. Strive to know the real preciousness of that mighty treasure committed to your charge. The value of all things will change greatly one day. The hour comes when money shall be worth no more than waste paper, and gold and diamonds shall be as the dust of the streets—when the palace of the noble, and the cottage of the peasant shall both alike fall to the ground—when stocks and funds shall be all unsaleable—and grace and faith and good hope be no longer underrated and despised. In that hour you will find out, in a way you never found out before, the value of the immortal soul. Soul-loss will then be seen to be the greatest of losses, and soul-gain the greatest of gains. Seek to know the value of the soul now. Do not be like the Egyptian Queen, who, in foolish ostentation, took a pearl of great value, dissolved it in acid, and then drank it off. Do not, like her, cast away the "pearl of great price," which God has committed to your charge. Once lost, no loss can compare with the loss of the soul

IV. Any man's soul may be saved.

I bless God that the Gospel of Christ enables me to proclaim these glad tidings, and to proclaim them freely and unconditionally to everyone who reads these pages. I bless God, that after all the solemn things I have been saying, I can wind up with a message of peace. I could not bear the awful responsibility of telling men that every one has a soul, that any one may lose his soul—that the loss of the soul is a loss for which nothing can make up—if I could not also proclaim that any man's soul may be saved.

I think it possible that this proclamation may sound startling to some readers of this paper. I remember the time when it would have sounded startling to me. But I am persuaded that it is neither more nor less than the voice of the everlasting Gospel, and I am not ashamed to make it known to all who have an ear to hear. I say boldly, that there is salvation in the Gospel for the chief of sinners. I say confidently, that any one and every one may have his soul saved!

I know that we are all sinners by nature—fallen, guilty, corrupt, covered with sin. I know that the God with whom we have to do is a most holy Being, of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and One who cannot look upon that which is evil. I know also that the world in which our lot is cast, is a hard world for religion. It is a world full of cares and troubles, of unbelief and impurity, of opposition and

hatred to God. It is a world in which true religion is like an exotic—a world which has an atmosphere that makes religion wither away. But, notwithstanding all this, hard as this world is, holy as God is, sinful as we are by nature—I say, that any one and every one may be saved. Any man or woman may be saved from the guilt, the power, the consequences of sin, and be found at length at the right hand of God in everlasting glory!

I fancy I hear some reader exclaim, "How can these things be?" No wonder that you ask that question. This is the great knot which heathen philosophers could never untie. This is the problem which all the sages of Greece and of Rome could not solve. This is the question which nothing can answer but the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. That answer of the Gospel I now desire to place before you. I proclaim then, with all confidence, that any one's soul may be saved, (1) *because Christ has once died.* Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has died upon the cross to make atonement for men's sins. "Christ has once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." (1 Pet. 3:18.) Christ has borne our sins in His own body on the tree, and allowed the curse we all deserved to fall on His head. Christ by His death has made satisfaction to the holy law of God which we have broken. That death was no common death—it was no mere example of self-denial; it was no mere death of a martyr, such as were the deaths of a Ridley, a Latimer, or a Cranmer. The death of Christ was a sacrifice and propitiation for the sin of the whole world. It was the vicarious death of an Almighty Substitute, Surety, and Representative of the sons of men. It paid our enormous debt to God. It opened up the way to heaven to all believers. It provided a fountain for all sin and uncleanness. It enabled God to be just, and yet to be the justifier of the ungodly. It purchased reconciliation with Him. It procured perfect peace with God for all who come to Him by Jesus. The prison doors were set open when Jesus died. Liberty was proclaimed to all who feel the bondage of sin, and desire to be free.

For whom, do you suppose, was all that suffering undergone, which Jesus endured at Calvary? Why was the holy Son of God dealt with as a malefactor, reckoned a transgressor, and condemned to so cruel a death? For whom were those hands and feet nailed to the cross? For whom was that side pierced with the spear? For whom did that precious blood flow so freely down? Why was all this done? It was done for you! It was done for the sinful—for the ungodly! It was done freely, voluntarily—not by compulsion—out of love to sinners, and to make atonement for sin. Surely, then, as Christ died for the ungodly, I have a right to proclaim that any one may be saved.

Furthermore, I proclaim with all confidence, that any one may be saved, (2) *because Christ still lives.* That same Jesus who once died for sinners, still lives at the right hand of God, to carry on the work of salvation which He came down from heaven to perform. He lives to receive all who come unto God by Him, and to give them power to become the sons of God. He lives to hear the confession of every heavy-laden conscience, and to grant, as an almighty High Priest, perfect absolution. He lives to pour down the Spirit of adoption on all who believe in Him, and to enable them to cry, Abba, Father! He lives to be the one Mediator between God and man, the unwearied Intercessor, the kind Shepherd, the elder Brother, the prevailing Advocate, the never-failing Priest and Friend of all who come to God by Him. He lives to be wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption to all His people—to keep them in life, to support them in death, and to bring them finally to eternal glory.

For whom, do you suppose, is Jesus sitting at God's right hand? It is for the sons of men. High in heaven, and surrounded by unspeakable glory, He still cares for that mighty work which He undertook when He was born in the manger of Bethlehem. He is not one whit altered. He is always in one mind. He is the same that He was when He walked the shores of the sea of Galilee. He is the same that He was when He pardoned Saul the Pharisee, and sent him forth to preach the faith he had once destroyed. He is the same that He was when He received Mary Magdalene—called Matthew the tax-collector—brought Zaccheus down from the tree, and made them examples of what His grace could do. And He is not changed. He is the same yesterday, and today, and forever. Surely I have a right to say that any one maybe saved, since Jesus lives.

Once more I proclaim, with all confidence, that any one may be saved, (3) *because the promises of Christ's gospel are full, free, and unconditional.* "Come unto Me," says the Savior, "all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"—"He who believes on the Son shall not perish, but have eternal life."—"He who believes on Him is not condemned."—"He who comes unto Me I will never cast out."—"Everyone who sees the Son, and believes on Him may have everlasting life."—"He who believes on Me has everlasting life."—"If any man thirsts, let him come unto Me and drink." "Whoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." (Matt. 11:28; John 3:15, 18; 6:37, 40, 47; 7:37; Rev. 22:17.)

For whom, do you suppose, were these words spoken? Were they meant for the Jews only? No—for the Gentiles also! Were they meant for people in old times only? No—for people in every age! Were they meant for Palestine and Syria only? No—for the whole world—for every name and nation and people and tongue! Were they meant for the rich only? No—for the poor as well as for the rich! Were they meant for the very moral and correct only? No—they were meant for all—for the chief of sinners—for the vilest of offenders, for all who will receive them! Surely when I call to mind these promises, I have a right to say that any one and every one may be saved. Any one who reads these words, and is not saved, can never blame the Gospel. If you are lost, it is not because you could not be saved. If you are lost, it is not because there was no pardon for sinners, no Mediator, no High Priest, no fountain open for sin and for uncleanness, no open door. It is because you would have your own way, because, you would cleave to your sins, because you would not come to Christ, that in Christ you might have life.

I make no secret of my object in sending forth this volume. My heart's desire and prayer to God for you is, that your soul may be saved. This is the grand object for which every faithful minister is ordained. This is the end for which we preach, and speak, and write. We want souls to be saved. They know not what they say, who charge us with worldly motives, and tell us we only wish to advance our own church, and promote priest-craft. We know nothing of such feelings. May God forgive those who lay these things to our charge! We labor for higher objects. We want souls to be saved! We love the Church of England—we feel deep affection for her Prayer-book, her Articles, her Homilies, her Forms for the Worship of God. But one thing we feel even more deeply—we want souls to be saved. We desire to pluck some brands from the burning. We desire to be the honored instruments in the hand of God of leading some souls to a knowledge of Jesus Christ our Lord.

And now I will conclude this paper by three words of **affectionate APPLICATION**, which I heartily pray God to bless to the spiritual good of many souls. I know not into whose hands these pages may fall. I draw my bow at a venture. I can only pray God that He may send an arrow home to some consciences, and that many who read this volume may lay it down smiting upon their bosoms and saying, "What must I do to be saved?"

(1) My first word of application shall be a word of ***affectionate WARNING***. That word of warning is short and simple—Do not neglect your own soul!

I have little doubt that this volume will fall into the hands of some who are often tried with anxiety about the things of this life. You are "anxious and troubled about many things." You seem to live in a constant whirl of business, hurry, and trouble. You see around you thousands who care for nothing but what they shall eat, and what they shall drink, and what they shall put on. You are often severely tempted to think it is no use to try to have any religion. I say to you, in God's name—Resist the temptation. It comes from the devil. I say to you—Never forget the one thing needful! Never forget your immortal soul!

You may tell me, perhaps, that the times are hard. They may be hard; but it is my duty to remind you that time is short, and will be soon changed for eternity. You may tell me that you must live; but it is my duty to remind you that you must also die, and be ready to meet your God. What would we think of a man who in time of famine fed his dog—and starved his child? Would we not say that he was a heartless and unnatural father? Well—take heed that you do not do something like this yourself. Do not forget your soul in your anxiety for your body. Do not, in your concern about the life that now is, forget that which is to come. Do not neglect your soul!

Whatever you may have been in time past, I beseech you for time to come to live as one who feels that he has an immortal soul! Lay down this book with a holy determination, by God's help, to "cease to do evil, and learn to do well." Do not be ashamed, from this time forward, to care about your soul's interests. Do not be ashamed to read your Bible, to pray, to keep the Sabbath holy, and to hear the Gospel preached. Of sin and ungodliness you may well be ashamed. You never need be ashamed of caring for your soul. Let others laugh if they will—they will not laugh at you one day. Take it patiently. Bear it quietly. Tell them you have made up your mind, and do not mean to alter. Tell them that you have learned one thing, if nothing else, and that is that you have a precious soul. And tell them you have resolved that, come what will, you will no longer neglect that soul.

(2) My second word of application shall be *an* ***affectionate INVITATION*** to all who desire their souls to be saved. I invite every reader of this paper who feels the value of his soul, and desires salvation, to come to Christ without delay, and be saved. I invite him to come to Christ by faith, and commit his soul to Him, that he may be delivered from the guilt, the power, and the consequences of sin.

My tongue is not able to tell, and my mind is too weak to explain, the whole extent of God's love towards sinners—and of Christ's willingness to receive and save souls. You are not straitened in Christ, but in yourself. You mistake greatly if you doubt Christ's readiness to save. I know there are no obstacles between that soul of yours and eternal life, except your own will. "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents." (Luke 15:10) You may have heard something of the wonders of the choruses at the Crystal Palace concerts. But what is all that burst of harmony in the "Hallelujah Chorus," to the outburst of joy which is heard in heaven when a soul turns from darkness to light? What is it all but a mere whisper, compared to the "joy of angels" over one sinner taught to see the folly of sin, and to seek Christ? Oh, come and add to that joy without delay!

If you love life, I beseech you to lay hold on Christ at once, that your soul may be saved. Why not do it today? Why not this day join yourself to the Lord Jesus in an everlasting covenant which cannot be broken? Why not resolve, before tomorrow's sun dawns, to turn from the service of sin, and turn to Christ? Why not go to Christ this very day, and cast your soul on Him, with all its sins and all its unbelief, with all its doubts and all its fears?

Are you poor? Seek treasure in heaven and be rich. Are you old? Hasten, hasten to be ready for your end, and prepare to meet your God. Are you young? Begin well, and seek in Christ a never-failing friend, who will never forsake you. Are you in trouble, anxious about this life? Seek Him who alone can help you and bear your burdens—seek Him who will never disappoint you. When others turn their backs upon you, then will Jesus Christ the Lord take you up. Are you a sinner, a great sinner, a sinner of the worst description? It shall all be remembered no more if you only come to Christ—His blood shall cleanse all sin away. Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made white as snow.

Go then, and cry to the Lord Jesus Christ. Think of the value of your soul, and think of the one way of salvation. Call on the Lord in earnest prayer. Do as the penitent thief did—pour out your heart before Him—cry, "Lord remember me, even me!" Tell him you come to Him, because you have heard that He "receives sinners," and because you are a sinner and want to be saved. Tell Him the whole story of your past life. Tell Him, if you will, that you have been an unbeliever, a profligate, a Sabbath-breaker, a godless, reckless, ill-tempered man. He will not despise you. He will not cast you out. He will not turn His back upon you. He never breaks the bruised reed, or quenches the smoking flax. No man ever came to Him and was cast out. Oh, come to Christ, and your soul shall live!

(3) My last word of application shall be an ***affectionate EXHORTATION*** to every reader of this paper who has found out the value of his soul, and believed in Jesus Christ. That exhortation shall be short and simple. I beseech you to cleave to the Lord with all your heart, and to press towards the mark for the prize of your high calling.

I can well conceive that you find your way very narrow. There are few with you—and many against you. Your lot in life may seem hard, and your position may be difficult. But still cleave to the Lord, and He will never forsake you. Cleave to the Lord in the midst of persecution. Cleave to the Lord, though men laugh at you and mock you, and try to make you ashamed. Cleave to the Lord, though the cross be heavy and the fight be hard. He was not ashamed of you upon the Cross of Calvary—then do not be ashamed of Him upon earth, lest He should be ashamed of you before His Father who is in heaven. Cleave to the Lord, and He will never forsake you. In this world there are plenty of disappointments—disappointments in properties, and families, and houses, and lands, and situations. But no man ever yet was disappointed in Christ. No man ever failed to find Christ all that the Bible says He is, and a thousand times better than he had been told before!

Look forward, look onward and forward to the end! Your best things are yet to come. Time is short. The end is drawing near. The latter days of the world are upon us. Fight the good fight. Labor on. Work on. Strive on. Pray on. Read on. Labor hard for your own soul's prosperity. Labor hard for the prosperity of the souls of others. Strive to bring a few more with you to heaven, and by all means to save some. Do something, by God's help, to make heaven more full and hell more empty. Speak to that young man by your side, and to that old person who lives near to your house. Speak to that neighbor who never goes to a place of worship. Speak to that relative who never reads the Bible in private, and makes a jest of serious religion. Entreat them all to think about their souls. Beg them to go and hear something on Sundays which will be for their good unto everlasting life. Try to persuade them to live, not like the

beasts which perish, but like men who desire to be saved. Great is your reward in heaven, if you try to do good to souls. Great is the reward of all who confess Christ before the sons of men.

The honors of this world will soon be at an end forever. The rewards which our gracious Queen bestows are only enjoyed for a few short years. The "Victoria Cross" will not be long worn by those brave soldiers who won it so gallantly and deserve it so richly. The place that knows them now shall soon know them no more—a few more years and they will be gathered to their fathers. But the crown which Christ gives, never fades. Seek that crown, my believing reader. Labor for that crown. It will make amends for all that you have to pass through in this troublous world. The rewards of Christ's soldiers are for evermore. Their home is eternal. Their glory never comes to an end!

Daniel Found Faithful

by J. C. Ryle

"Then said these men—We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel except we find it against him concerning the law of his God." Daniel 6:5

It would be impossible, I think, to imagine a higher testimony to a man's character than you have heard in these words. You know how ready the world is to find fault with a Christian—how closely his conduct is watched, how eagerly his shortcomings are proclaimed—and happy indeed are those who by grace are so enabled to live, that the godless and profane can find no occasion against them.

In order, however, that you may fully understand the peculiar value of the testimony in my text, you ought to know something of **the time and circumstances** in which it was given.

Daniel, who was a prince of the royal family of Judah, and descended directly from David, had been carried to Babylon as a prisoner, with many other Jews, when Jerusalem was destroyed. While there, it pleased God to bring him into favor with the heathen kings of Babylon, and he was advanced to great dignity and honor. Nor was his honor ever taken from him; for when Belshazzar was overthrown, and the kingdom of Babylon was taken by the Medes and Persians, the Lord inclined the heart of Darius the Mede to make Daniel the first among his counselors, who ordered all things under the king. But the wicked followers of Darius became jealous of Daniel. They made a conspiracy against him, and for a while they succeeded; for they obtained a decree that Daniel should be cast into the den of lions. But God, whom he served, here came to his assistance: he was miraculously preserved; his enemies were condemned, and perished in his stead; and King Darius gave glory to God.

Such is a short account of the interesting history which you will find in the chapter from which my text is taken—a chapter which I take occasion to recommend to your particular attention.

I purpose this afternoon to speak on two points only in this history. One is the character of Daniel, which here came out like gold from the fire, as an example for your imitation. The other is the mysterious dealings of God with him, as a ground for our instruction and comfort. May God the Holy Spirit apply the subject to all your consciences; may none of you be content with admiring the faith and patience of the godly—but may you be led to pray for the grace of God, that you may follow in their steps.

I. First, then, with respect to **Daniel's character**, I would observe there are *three points* to be especially noticed.

(*a*) There is his steady walk with God. He was now ninety years of age; he had spent more than the ordinary life of man in the very heart of a wicked city and a corrupt court. He had riches and honors and everything to make this world enjoyable—but he never turned aside from the narrow way, either to the right hand or the left. The eyes of all were fixed upon him; many envied and hated him. They examined his public conduct; they inquired into his private character; they sifted his words and actions—but they sought in vain for any ground of accusation. He was so steady, so upright, so conscientious, that they could find no occasion of fault in him—they could not find any charge against him, except as concerning the law of his God.

Oh, what an unanswerable argument is a believer's life! Oh, what an epistle of Christ is the daily conduct of a child of God! Men cannot see your hearts, nor understand your principles—but they can see your lives! And if they find that pious masters, servants, brothers, friends, sisters, husbands, wives, do far exceed all others in their several positions, then you are bringing glory to God and honor to your Redeemer. Think not that your profession is worth anything, if it is not known of others by its godly fruit; without this it is little better than sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. We do not find that Daniel blew his trumpet before him, and talked everywhere about his own experience—but he walked close to God, and his life spoke for him, and his character became known in Babylon, and even his enemies were obliged to confess—The hand of God is here, the Lord is truly with this man!

(*b*) Another point which I would have you notice is Daniel's habit of private prayer. This was the hidden cause of all his steadiness, and it was discovered accidentally on this occasion. It seems that his enemies had obtained a decree of the king, that whoever should ask a petition of any God for thirty days should be cast into the den of lions. And having laid this snare for this holy man, we read that they assembled and found Daniel praying and making supplication before God.

We are also told that he was in the habit of kneeling upon his knees and praying three times a day; this was the practice of holy David, as we read in the Psalms, and this was the spirit of the centurion in the Acts, who prayed to God always. So Paul exhorts the Ephesians to pray always with all prayer and supplications, and the Thessalonians to pray without ceasing. And such has been the habit of all the most eminent saints of God: they have not been content with a few cold heartless words every morning and every night, they have lived in the spirit of prayer, and sent up many a short earnest petition throughout the day.

Moreover, we are told that Daniel prayed with his windows open towards Jerusalem, and this is a most important circumstance. He

did this, and so did every pious Jew, not only because it was the land of his fathers and the land of promise, not simply because God would be worshiped there and there only—but chiefly because all the types and emblems of the Messiah, the one way of salvation, the altar, the sacrifice, and the high priest, were to be found there. And so also we, if we would have our prayers heard, must pray towards the Lord Jesus Christ, the true Temple, our Altar, our High Priest and our Sacrifice. These are the prayers which God will answer; this is the only way by which we can draw near with confidence, and find grace to help in time of need. Mark well, beloved, the habit of private prayer: here is the secret of that steadiness which Daniel showed in Babylon—here was the staff which preserved him upright in the middle of temptations.

We know that he had all the cares of government upon his shoulders; he must have been surrounded with the business and affairs of nations—but none of these things prevented him from drawing near to God.

Nor was he a man to say "I am a chosen servant of God, I need not be so anxious about means"; he knew that God would keep him—but not unless he showed anxiety to have protection, not without diligence in using all the means of grace. Oh, he will rise in judgment and condemn many a one, who dares to think that he will find mercy while he lives in the neglect of regular heartfelt private devotion!

(*c*) The last point to be observed in Daniel's character is his faith, his confidence in God. The decree appeared, forbidding all sorts of worship for thirty days on pain of death; and oh, how many professors of our generation would have held their peace! how many would have said, "It is but a short time, we need not give offence; the Lord does not require us to lose our lives in His service"? But look at Daniel: he knew that the writing was signed—he knew that he was watched—he knew that his life was at stake—and yet he went to his house and kneeled on his knees and prayed as he did aforetime. He did not on the one hand run into danger, nor did he on the other flinch from it. Here was no carnal policy, no time-serving, no crooked contrivance, no love of expediency. He made a straight path for his feet; he did as usual, neither more nor less; and why? Look at the twenty-third verse: he believed in his God. Mark here the fruits of daily communion with God; see how a habit of prayer will produce quietness and assurance in the hour of trial and difficulty.

There never have been lacking lewd men of the baser sort, who say, Where is the use of your praying? what good will it do you? But wait until the days of affliction come upon you, and the Lord will provide you with an answer. A habit of prayer will impart special reliance upon God in time of danger; it will give a special boldness; it will secure a special deliverance, for those who honor God He will honor. Happy indeed are those who, like Daniel, pray without ceasing: they will find within them the same spirit of faith, they never need fear being surprised, they are like him, always the same and always ready.

II. Let us now consider the other branch of our subject: I mean **the mysterious dealings of God with His faithful and holy servant.**

(*a*) Observe, then, there was first a season of darkness. Who would have supposed that God would have allowed iniquity so far to triumph as to leave Daniel in the hands of enemies! Who would have thought that this pious old man would be cast into the den of lions. But God's ways are not as our ways; and wonderful as it may appear, the wicked were permitted to work their will for a season. Daniel was accused of breaking the laws; he was pronounced guilty; he was condemned to death; the king labored to deliver him—but he could not; the decree could not be altered—Daniel must die! He was let down into this pit—the den of savage beasts, and a stone was laid upon the mouth of the den. And then, no doubt, he was looked upon as a dead man. Sin appeared to have prevailed, the wicked rejoiced at their success, and the righteous, the little flock at Babylon, wept and mourned to think that a brother, a faithful witness, had been taken from the earth.

Pause here, beloved, for an instant. This hour of darkness seems to you a mystery. But is it not agreeable to all the dealings of God with man? Do you not often see things hard to be understood in the world around you? How often the wicked prosper, and have all that man could desire; how often iniquity abounds and the love of God waxes cold—and the righteous are oppressed and silenced and afraid. How often it seems as if the Lord has forgotten this earth, and cares not though His servants are persecuted and His name blasphemed. How often we feel disposed to cry—how long, O Lord, holy and true, will You not judge and avenge Yourself on the ungodly!

And does not the Christian often see things hard to be explained in his own heart? Is he not often tried with seasons of darkness and sorrow? Yes! Many a believer can testify that sometimes he has felt like Paul before his shipwreck; neither sun nor stars have appeared for many days, and almost every hope of being saved has been taken away—many a one could tell you that the enemy has sometimes come in upon him like a flood, he has been overwhelmed with afflictions and temptations, he has been ready to cry out of the depths, as it were, "Lord I am sinking—my soul is among lions, I am destitute, afflicted, tormented, deserted, forlorn, forsaken!"

Yes: God's ways are often difficult and mysterious to His people; we cannot see the meaning of many things which happen around us, we think them hard, we almost quarrel with the Lord's arrangements, but those who are really wise will be patient, they will wait to see the end, and lay to heart the words of the Lord Jesus. "What I am doing, you don't understand now—but you shall know hereafter."

(*b*) Come now and hear how the darkness was scattered and the light returned. Heaviness may endure for a night—but joy comes in the morning. Daniel, you have seen, was allowed to go through the furnace of tribulation—but the time came at last when God intervened on his servant's behalf, and made his dealings clear and plain. Daniel was cast into the lions' den—but the Lord was with him and therefore he was safe. We read that the king, Darius, came very early in the morning to the mouth of the cave, and cried with an anxious and lamentable voice, "Daniel . . . is your God . . . able to deliver you." And oh, how joyful must his feelings have been when he heard the holy man's reply: "O King, live forever; my God has sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me!"

And need I tell you that Daniel was brought forth, and honored and exalted; while his enemies, in their turn, were cast into the den and the lions destroyed them all? So true it is that light is sown for the righteous, that God will keep in perfect peace, those whose minds are stayed on Him. So true are the words of Psalm—"The one who lives under the protection of the Most High dwells in the shadow of the Almighty. He Himself will deliver you from the hunter's net, from the destructive plague. He will cover you with His

feathers; you will take refuge under His wings. His faithfulness will be a protective shield. You will not fear the terror of the night, the arrow that flies by day, the plague that stalks in darkness, or the pestilence that ravages at noon. Though a thousand fall at your side and ten thousand at your right hand, the pestilence will not reach you. You will only see it with your eyes and witness the punishment of the wicked. Because you have made the Lord your dwelling place, no harm will come to you; no plague will come near your tent. You will tread on the lion and the cobra; you will trample the young lion and the serpent. Because he is lovingly devoted to Me, I will deliver him; I will exalt him because he knows My name. When he calls out to Me, I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble. I will rescue him and give him honor. I will satisfy him with a long life and show him My salvation."

(*c*) Consider now, beloved, what showers of good descended from this dark cloud which at one time seemed so threatening. Think what a blessed effect this deliverance would have on Daniel! What deep views of God's love and power and goodness and wisdom he would obtain! What strength it would add to his faith, what warmth to his prayers! How every grace within his bosom would shoot forth with renewed vigor. Think, too, what an impression would be made upon the godless and profane; what shame would cover the faces of those who had thought Daniel went too far and was righteous overmuch; how many would be brought to tremble and fear before a God who could deliver after such a fashion.

(*d*) Think, lastly, what mighty good would come to the people and cause of God, how much they would be comforted by such a miracle, how much they would be encouraged to go forward: the very thing which once appeared so untoward, which threatened the destruction of Israel and the dishonor of God, would bring glory to the Lord, and set forward the kingdom of heaven.

And so, beloved, it has always been. God's dealings may seem mysterious—but wait awhile, and the darkness shall disappear, and the light shall shine, and the crooked shall appear straight, and the rough places shall become smooth.

Satan does often seem to have his own way in the world—but still there are many proofs that the prosperity of the wicked is short, and the lying lips are but for a moment. There are seasons when many a hardened sinner is forced to confess, "Verily there is a God who judges the earth." Many a Christian would tell you that the trials and chastisements which appeared so bitter have borne most blessed fruit to his soul; he has sown in tears—but he has reaped in joy. There are few who shall not find in the world to come, that afflictions which bowed them to the dust, and were grievous at the time, were nothing less than mercies—they were the very medicines which healed their sin-diseased souls, and purified their hearts for heaven!

Who is there among you that is timid and undecided and inconsistent—afraid to do anything to displease men and yet not satisfied if he does not give his heart to God—conscious that he ought to bear the cross and follow Christ—but fearful of giving offence to the world? Go, study the character of Daniel, and make it your example. Behold a child of Adam like yourself following the Lord fully, not only when all were with him—but when all were against him; ready to lose his life in this world if so he might attain to life eternal. Are you flesh and blood? so was he. Are you by nature sinful? so was he. The grace of God made him what he was—and the grace of God can make you like him, if you are only willing. But go, confess your faith as he did: if you are ashamed of Christ, most surely Christ will be ashamed of you. The double-minded and the unstable shall never gain the heavenly crown.

Where are the men who say "We cannot do the things which you require; we cannot come to Christ upon your terms? There would be no living in the world, no caring for our families, if we took your advice. We have no time for such religion; we cannot altogether give up the world." Oh, look at holy Daniel! He had the charge of millions upon his hands, he was the chief among the presidents of an empire, he had the management of kingdoms and their affairs; and yet mark this, O you despisers and lazy ones—and yet he found time to be a faithful servant of God, he found time to cultivate the vineyard of his soul most closely, he contrived to walk with God as few have ever walked. Are you wiser than he? Are your leisure hours more entirely taken up? Oh, be ashamed of vain excuses, and take this man of business for your pattern, and do not tell us you cannot come to Christ, until you have followed Daniel's steps and prayed without ceasing.

Is there an humble-minded follower of Jesus among you? Set Daniel before your eyes. Be bold, be faithful, be meek, be persevering; endeavor to walk so uprightly that all may glorify God on your behalf, that none may find occasion against you except as concerning the law of your God.

Fear not because you sometimes walk in darkness and have no light. Remember that you cannot understand the mind of the Lord, nor the meaning of His dealings. But when the clouds compass you about, believe in God as Daniel did; trust in the Lord Jesus at all times; sing to Him in the dungeon, as Paul and Silas; sing to Him even in the fire, as the three Hebrew children did; be sure, be very sure, he who believes shall never be ashamed.

I will add for your comfort the words of a very Christian poet, a sweet singer in Israel—

"God moves in a mysterious way,
His wonders to perform;
He plants His footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.

Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never-failing skill,
He treasures up His bright designs,
And works His sovereign will.

You fearful saints, fresh courage take,
The clouds you so much dread,
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His grace;
Behind a frowning Providence

He hides a smiling face.

His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower.

Blind unbelief is sure to err,
And scan His work in vain.
God is His own interpreter,
And He will make it plain!"

THE UNCHANGING CHRIST

by J. C. Ryle

"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and forever." Hebrews 13:8

Always the same! unchanging!—that is a glorious character; a character which belongs to nothing that is of the earth; a character which He alone deserves, who is the Lord from heaven.

What of this present world in which we live and move and have our being? It has stamped upon it the marks of a tremendous change; it is no longer the same as it was in the beginning, it cannot be that fair creation of which God pronounced every part and portion to be very good. Doubtless we see that it is still a beautiful world, clothed with all that is lovely to the eye, furnished with all that is necessary to our comfort, stored with everything that can make life enjoyable. You may see everywhere the traces of a bountiful Father's hand. But still, we repeat, this world is not what it once was: it is no longer the same—no more the same than the gallant ship which yesterday did walk the waters like a thing of life, and today is dashed high on the beach and lies there a wreck, dismasted, shattered, and forsaken. This world is no more the same than the ruin of some ancient magnificent temple, which now stands desolate and silent and alone, with weeds and briars creeping over its floor, and ivy hanging about its broken walls like a widow's garment.

Just so this world has gone through a blighting, withering change; and therefore it is we see so much of lusts unbridled, and tempers ungoverned, and passions unrestrained, and intellects degraded, and affections misplaced, and powers misapplied, and God neglected, dishonored and lightly esteemed. And the sicknesses which devour their thousands, and the wars which cut off their tens of thousands, and the graves of infants snatched away in the spring-time of life, and the tears and distresses and troubles and sorrows and afflictions which God never placed in Eden—but of which we now hear continually—all these tell you the same tale, the world is no longer the same. All these are the handwriting on the wall, to remind us that man, like an unfaithful steward, has marred and spoiled his Maker's handiwork by his own sin, and so put the creation out of order and course.

But we have not time, beloved, to compare earth as it is with earth as it was before Adam fell: it is enough to know that by his transgression all things suffered, for after his transgression all things were altered. We would rather go on to set before you proofs which are more under your own eyes and come within your own observation. We wish you to feel the full force and blessedness of the character Paul has given to your Lord and Savior in our text; and in order to this we think it of first importance to establish in your minds this grand point—that **there is nothing on earth of which you can say it is unchangeable**, it is always the same, yesterday, to-day, and forever.

First, then, we ask you to mark that the **empires and kingdoms** of this world continue not the same: not all the victories which mighty conquerors have won, not all the blood which they have spilt to cement and make firm their thrones, not all the gold and treasure they have heaped together, not all the territory they have brought under their authority, not all the laws they have carefully framed for their subjects, have ever availed to build up one single kingdom that has stood firm and undestroyed.

Some have endured for a longer space than others—some have appeared likely to remain until the end of time—but sooner or later all have wasted away, their strength has gone from them, they have decayed and passed by, and their place is no more found.

Where are the kingdoms of Judah and Israel, whose power and magnificence we read of in the books of Kings and Chronicles? Armies like the sand of the sea for multitude, gold and silver abundant beyond even our conceptions—who would have thought such greatness would come to nothing? But Judah and Israel could not bear prosperity; they did not live up to their privileges, they provoked God by their wickedness; and so the chosen land became a desert, and Jerusalem itself was given to be burned, and, notwithstanding all their wealth and power, no sooner did the Lord touch them than they fell.

And where, too, are those mighty nations whose names so often meet our eyes in searching the Old Testament Scriptures—Nineveh and Babylon and Egypt? Time was when they had all the world at their feet, they ruled over countless people and tongues, and none could stand before them. And yet one after the other they were overthrown and melted away! God used them as instruments to punish and chastise His faithless people—but after they had done His work He did not forget to reckon with them for their own sins. And, with all their pomp, and splendor, and majesty, no sooner did He put forth His hand and touch them, than they too consumed away and fell. The very cities where their kings reigned, are no more—their palaces are levelled with the dust, their lofty walls which were their pride are utterly broken down. Nineveh, that exceeding great city, has been so completely destroyed that the exact spot where she once stood is no longer known. And Babylon, the wonder of the world, the hammer of the whole earth, has become, as Jeremiah foretold, a desolation, a dry land, a wilderness, a land wherein no man dwells, neither does any son of man pass thereby.

O beloved, man in his best estate is altogether vanity; the works of his hands are, like himself, frail and short-lived and perishable and

ready to fade away; with all his boasted wisdom he can make nothing lasting, he cannot secure his handiwork against change. The oldest dominion in Europe, is so to speak, only of yesterday; and who knows but there may be a worm at the heart of the strongest empire on earth, and a few short years and she too may be gone?

But again, we ask you to mark that even **churches** continue not the same. Alas! there is only too much evidence that they too may fall to pieces and decay. Where are the churches whose faith and patience and love and zeal shine forth so brightly in the Acts and Epistles of the New Testament? Where is the church of Antioch and the church of Ephesus, the church of Philippi and the church of Berea, the church of Thessalonica and the church of Corinth—those holy communions which once brought such glory and praise to God, whose obedience was spoken of throughout the world, whose children were ready to shed their blood for the Gospel's sake? They are gone, they are dead, they are fallen; they kept not their first estate, they became high-minded and puffed up with self-conceit; they did not persevere in well-doing, they did not abound in the fruits of righteousness, and so the Lord who had grafted them in, did also cut them off like withered and useless branches. And if anything can be said to remain of them, it is but the wreck and remnant of what they once were.

Doubtless, beloved, there are promises belonging to Christ's Church generally—the gates of hell shall not prevail against it; the Lord will never leave Himself without a witness—but there is no assurance that the church of any particular place or nation shall abide unchanged, except she continues faithful. Take any church on earth, the most renowned for wisdom, the most famous for age, the most apostolic in her government; and we are bold to tell you if that church is unfaithful to the Bridegroom Christ Jesus, if she does not hold forth the light of the pure gospel, if she leaves her first love, if she allows false prophets to teach and seduce, if she becomes lukewarm, and says "I am rich and increased with goods," if she rests content with having a name to live while she is dead, and plumes herself on keeping hold of the truth while she does not witness to it—we are bold to tell you, however long God's mercy may spare her, her candlestick shall sooner or later be removed, for we know this fearful threat has been over and over again made good.

Yes! even we have reason to watch and to pray and to be humble and fear: the fine gold may become dim! No home is so strong, but it may be broken up; no church so well ordered, but through the sin and faithlessness of her members she may be overturned. The Lord Himself once gave the pattern of His temple—but when the Jews who kept it turned their own way and repented not, when they thought only of a form of godliness and despised the power, that very temple was delivered over to be destroyed, and of all its beautiful stones, not one was left upon another.

But we desire to bring this matter nearer home to yourselves. Have you not ever observed that **men's circumstances** are always changing—they are never long the same? Few indeed are those who have not learned this by bitter experience. Some begin life with every prospect of earthly prosperity, and before they have reached their prime their riches seem to have melted away, and are scattered like the leaves in autumn, and they find themselves stripped of their possessions! Others, who remain wealthy, are smitten with some sore disease, they have no power to enjoy the fortune God has given them, and often, when ready to cry in the evening "Would God it were morning," and in the morning "Would God it were evening!" Often when faint and weary and cast down with pain, often would they give all their riches for a little health—and think it cheaply purchased!

Others with bodily strength and store of worldly goods are bereaved of friends by death or separation. Their parents, the comforters of their sorrows, the companions of their joys—are one after the other taken from them; year after year their beloved ones, with whom they have taken sweet counsel, and who were as their own souls, are all cut down or removed, until at length they stand, like the last tree of the forest, all single and alone.

Remember, I say not but that this is good: well for us that we are constrained to drink the bitter cup of affliction; it is the rod by which many are brought home to Christ—none are in such fearful peril as those who have never known a cross. But judge whether it is not true, that our own life is full of changes; that man is a poor, frail, perishable creature, and never continues long in one condition. There is nothing about his earthly condition certain and fixed and immovable and sure. We never know, when we part from those that are dear to us, that we shall meet again: we know not what alterations time may work before we once more meet face to face, before hand grasps hand and we again take sweet counsel about our common faith and our hopes of heaven. We may part rejoicing and meet sorrowing; part with laughter and meet with tears; part with many around us and meet with few: strange if we part and meet the same!

Oh, changing, changing world! Miserable indeed are they who look upon it as an abiding habitation, who think themselves anything but strangers, who give to anything but heaven, the name of 'home'.

Look at men's **minds**. They are not always the same. The intellect of the prudent statesman, the talent of the eloquent orator—these are not armor against decay. The mind of man is a beautiful thing—when trained and educated and polished as it may be. But often we see that same mind become a mere wreck, the eye become dim and the natural force abated; the memory fails, the senses are deadened. We see all the weakness of childhood without its playfulness and light heart. This is a grief, and one more proof that we are not always the same.

Look at men's **affections**. They are not always the same. They may be warm and strong for a season—but then become cool. Often time, and absence, and the world, cause strangeness and coldness between spirit and spirit, bitter and painful to bear—but it must be borne. Business and new ties and new residence and new relations nip off old friendships. Our changing affections are one more proof that nothing remains always the same.

Onwards, onwards we are all moving: there is no standing still. The infant will soon be a boy, and the boy a man, and the man will find gray hairs upon him long before he expects, and the grave will be ready for him probably before he is ready for it! Men plant and build and labor and toil and plan and contrive—and often never see their schemes completed. For we never know what is before us—what tomorrow may bring forth; it may be, as the marriage service beautifully teaches, better or worse, richer or poorer, sickness or health.

We may find in our path towards Zion sweet flowers—but far more likely thistles and thorns; we may have some season of sunshine—but far more often darkness and clouds. But still, whatever happens, we are rolling onward towards the end, and this we may be sure of—we shall never be long without some change, we shall never find our state is long the same, tomorrow and yesterday may be

widely different.

Once more. **The holiest saints of God are not always the same.** We have no fear that their names will ever be blotted from the Lamb's book of life—but we believe their hearts are often filled with shame and confusion because of their own shortcomings and unsteady walk with God. Show me one single servant of the Lord in Scripture who did not at some time err and stumble in his course, who did not by his inconsistency or sin give occasion to the Lord's enemies to blaspheme. Oh, the best of men have given melancholy proof that so long as we are in the body we are liable to change. We venture to assert there is not one in the white-robed company of the redeemed who would tell you he had always held on his way without wavering, always fought an equally good fight; not one but could remember that at his best there were days of spiritual sloth and drowsiness, days of unholy and unchristlike tempers, days of vanity and self-conceit, days of self-indulgence and conformity to this world, days of coldness and lack of love—and each the cause of pain and sorrow and self-abasement.

Away with the idea of a sinless perfection on earth! We are bound to aim at it, we are sworn to strive after it; that man is no true Christian who sits down lazily and thinks to be saved without striking a blow, who does not wish to be holy as God is holy, and perfect as God is perfect—but still we are confident the dearest children of God do never lay claim to any personal sinlessness and perfection; their hearts' confession is, "Lord, we are exceedingly unprofitable servants, in many things we offend daily," and their hearts' prayer, "Jesus, Master, bear with our sins and pardon our iniquities."

No, beloved, there is nothing unchangeable and the same here below. Kingdoms, churches, human conditions, holy Christians, all are alike in this respect—they are liable to alter, they are never long the same. There is but one account of everything we see around us: it is all fleeting, perishing, passing away. The sun—which has shone on so many births and lighted so many graves—shall one day be darkened. The solid hills, which have looked down on generation after generation and been trampled on by one short-lived owner after another, shall melt away. The glorious heaven above us shall pass away like a scroll. All speak with one voice, "We shall soon be changed, we shall not always be the same."

And where, beloved, are we to look for comfort and rest to our souls? We want a sure and lasting foundation; we want a hope in which there is no variableness nor shadow of turning. And mark it down—this cannot be on earth—they who search for it here will search in vain—a sure hope for the soul is not to be found in the land of the living. "The depth says, It is not in me: and the sea says, It is not with me. It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof. . . ." But "God understands the way thereof, and He knows the place" where peace may be found, and in the text He sets it openly before our eyes: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and forever." Now, of this sameness we desire to speak fully and freely, and to show you the comfortable things which it contains.

We would remind you, then, that **Jesus has ever been the same in His office, person and nature**. In these latter days He has graciously made plain to our eyes the way of salvation, by coming upon earth to teach, to suffer and to die. He has proved Himself the Son of God with power by rising again from the dead. But still we would not have you forget He was always the same—yesterday as well as today.

Before the mountains were brought forth—or the earth and world were formed, from everlasting Jesus Christ was, like the Father, very God. From the beginning He was foreordained to be the Savior of sinners. He was always the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, without whose blood there could be no remission. The same Jesus, to whom alone we may look for salvation, that same Jesus was the only hope of Abel and Enoch and Noah and Abraham and all the patriarchs; what we are privileged to see distinctly they doubtless saw indistinctly—but the Savior both we and they rest upon is one. It was Christ Jesus who was foretold in all the prophets, and foreshadowed and represented in all the law—the daily sacrifice of the lamb, the cities of refuge, the brazen serpent, all these were so many emblems to Israel of that Redeemer who was yet to come, and without whom no man could be saved. There never was but one road to heaven: Jesus Christ was the way, the truth and the life yesterday as well as today.

But we must pass on to another point of even greater interest than this. We remind you that **the CHARACTER of Jesus Christ is always the same—in this too He is unchangeable**. What He was in the New Testament days He continues now, and will be even to the end. Consider now, I pray you, what a mine of comfort and consolation lies in that single thought.

Always the same in love towards men's souls. It was love towards a fallen world which made Him lay aside for a season His glorious majesty and honor, and take upon Him the form of a servant upon earth; it was love that constrained Him to endure the cross and despise the shame, and lay down His life for us the ungrateful and the ungodly; it was love that moved Him to shed tears over bloody-minded, unbelieving Jerusalem, because she would not know the things belonging to her peace; and it is just the same love which He feels towards sinners now—He never changes.

Again, Jesus is always the same in His power to save. It was He who cast forth seven devils from Mary Magdalen and raised her up to newness of life. It was He who poured comfort on that weeping penitent sinner in the Pharisee's house, and pronounced those blessed words, "Your sins are forgiven you, go in peace." It was He who entered the house of Zacchaeus, chief of the tax collectors, and declared that salvation was come unto him, that he was a true son of Abraham. It was He who gave that blessed assurance to the dying thief who prayed to be remembered, "This day you shall be with me in Paradise." It was He who met the persecuting Saul on his way to Damascus, and cast him down to the ground with all his pride, and put in him a new heart, and sent him forth to preach the faith he had once destroyed. And, O brethren beloved, who then, need despair? Christ Jesus is still just the same—able to save to the uttermost all those that come to God by him.

But again: Jesus Christ is always the same in His willingness to receive the penitent. We never read of any who sought Him in sincerity and sought Him in vain, who came poor in spirit and were sent away empty. Oh, no! far otherwise; there is everything to encourage, to invite, to lead us on. Who was it that used those comforting words, "Come unto Me all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Him that comes unto me I will never cast out." "The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost." "Everyone who sees the Son and believes on Him may have everlasting life." Who was it but Jesus Christ—ever the same! He will not go back from one jot or tittle of His words, and what He has spoken He will still make good. "Heaven and earth," He says, "shall pass away—but my word shall not pass away."

Once more "Jesus Christ is always the same in His power to preserve. He will not begin the work of grace and leave it uncompleted; for it is His own word, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me, and I give unto them eternal life, and no man shall ever pluck them out of my hand." It was He who raised the apostles after they had shame fully forsaken Him and fled; it was He who turned the heart of even Peter back again, though he had denied Him before His face. And what He did then, beloved, He will do now also, for every believer; it shall never be said that any trusted in Jesus and were confounded, for the Author and Finisher of our faith never changes.

Always the same! It is this which gives such value to the Gospels in which our Lord's history is told. We are not reading there the life and sayings of one fickle and changeable like ourselves—but the life and sayings of a Redeemer who is now what He was then. We tell you confidently that all that love and gentleness and compassion and long-suffering and tenderheartedness which you may there see in your Lord and Savior's character, are placed before you that you may understand the character of Him from whom alone we receive forgiveness and to whom alone your prayer must be made, and we say this because we know He is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Always the same! It is this which makes the gospel so excellent and precious. We do not bid you depend on anything less than the tried corner-stone, the fountain whose water shall never fail—the city of refuge whose walls shall never be broken down—the sure Rock of Ages. Churches may decay and perish; riches may make themselves wings and fly away—but he who builds his happiness on Christ crucified and union with Him by faith, that man is standing on a foundation which shall never be moved, and will know something of true peace.

There are men and women in the world who rest all upon their personal amendment—or upon an unwearied round of services and regular attendance upon holy ordinances; and they imagine their spiritual disease is healed and all is peace. But we believe it is the peace of those who never found out their enemy, the cure of those who have never really felt their hearts' ailments.

Oh no! we believe when a man is once aroused to see the extent of his soul's danger, when he has felt the burden of his sins indeed grievous and intolerable, when he has found out his debt and his own inability to pay—we are confident that man will never get peace until he has sought the Lord Jesus Christ, until he has taken for a Friend and Advocate Him that is the same yesterday, and today, and forever. That man will not be put off with the ornaments and trappings of the Church which is the bride, he will never rest content until he has laid hold of the Lord Jesus, the Bridegroom, and has become one with Christ and Christ with him.

One word in CONCLUSION. Are there not some among you who in one sense have always been the same—thoughtless, careless about your eternal interests, always lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, always more anxious about the life that now is than the life which is to come, always disposed to give your best things to the world, and the leavings of your time and talent to God? We warn you plainly there must be a change, a deep foundation-searching change, a change of heart. We call on you to remember the words of Him who never goes back from what He says: "Except you repent, you shall all likewise perish." "Except you be converted, and become as little children, you shall never enter into the kingdom of heaven."

Oh! but it does not need a prophet's eye to see changes and trials before you all! The breaking up of family circles, the separation from those you love best, the loss of health, friends, earthly possessions: who knows but they may be very near? and alas for those among you who have got no sure resting-place for your weary souls, who are building your happiness on the frail and perishable things of earth, for when you look for solid consolations you shall find none! O man, the time is flying, death and judgment are at hand; and what will you do if you have to seek your spiritual comforts at the eleventh hour? Of all your riches you can carry nothing away: naked you came into the world, and naked you must return; of all your dear friends, who now weep when you weep and rejoice when you rejoice, not one can go with you beyond the tomb; they may sit beside you in your last hours, they may watch your spirit's flight, they may follow your body to its long home with measured pace and slow—but there earthly friendship must stop—it can go no farther than the brink of your narrow bed—they will turn away each to his own duties, and you shall be left alone.

O man, be wise in time; learn to lay up treasures in heaven, think first of a house not made with hands, look to that precious Friend who never fails: away with your cold and sleeping shadow of religion; cease to be a Christian in name and form only, become a man of God in deed and in truth; come to your eternal Father as a little child, with confession and prayer; take all your sins to the Savior who died upon the cross; let nothing satisfy you until you are a living member of Jesus Christ, one with Christ and Christ with you. In Him I can warrant you a hope that never changes—a title to happiness that shall never be overthrown.

But are there any among you who have tasted of this blessed change—who have put off the old man which is corrupt, and put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness—who mourn over your own daily shortcomings, and sigh after more holiness, more self-denial, more mortification of the flesh with all its lusts? We bid you take comfort, and remember that Christ is still the same: He called you and gave you the witness of the Spirit, and He will not forsake you. You may waver and tremble: go forward in faith, and He will still support you. There is but one more change before you—the changing of this vile body that it may be made a spiritual body, the putting off the corruptible to put on the incorruptible, the giving up what is mortal to receive what is immortal, the laying aside the earthly tabernacle, the entering on a heavenly one. Watch, then, and pray, and He who gave you the first change shall give you the second also; and then you shall go out no more—no more weariness, no more weakness, no more fainting! You shall see your Savior as He is and love Him as you ought, and like Him at last be unchanged and the same for evermore!

CHRIST'S POWER TO SAVE

by J. C. Ryle

"He is able to save to the uttermost, those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them." Hebrews 7:25

There is one subject in religion about which we can never know too much. That subject is Jesus Christ the Lord. This is the mighty subject which the text that heads this page unfolds, Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ's intercession.

I have heard of a book entitled "The Story without an End." I know no story deserving that title so well as the everlasting Gospel—this is indeed and in truth the story without an end. There is an infinite "fullness" in Christ. There are in Him "unsearchable riches." There is in Him a "love which passes knowledge." He is an "unspeakable gift." (Col. 1:19; Eph. 3:8; 3:19; 2 Cor. 9:15.) There is no end to all the riches which are treasured up in Him—in His person, in His work, in His offices, in His words, in His deeds, in His life, in His death, in His resurrection. I take up only one branch of the great subject this day. I am going to consider the intercession and priestly office of our Lord Jesus Christ.

There are three points which I purpose to examine in opening the text which heads this paper.

I. You have here a description of all true Christians—they are a people who "come to God by Christ"

II. You have the work that Jesus Christ is ever carrying on behalf of true Christians—He "ever lives to make intercession for them."

III. You have the comfortable conclusion built by Paul upon Christ's work of intercession. He says, "He is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them."

I. You have, first, **a description of all true Christians**. It is most simple, most beautiful, and most true. Great is the contrast between the description given by the Holy Spirit of a Christian, and the description which is given by man! With man it is often enough to say that such a one "goes to church," or that such a one "belongs to this body of Christians, or to that." It is not so when the Holy Spirit draws the picture. The Holy Spirit describes a Christian as a man "who comes unto God by Christ."

True Christians come unto God. They are not as many who turn their backs upon Him—who "go into a far country," like the prodigal son, "who go out," like Cain, "from the presence of the Lord,"—who are "alienated, strangers, and enemies in their mind by wicked works." (Coloss. 1:21.) They are reconciled to God and friends of God. They are not as many, who dislike everything that belongs to God—His word, His day, His ordinances, His people, His house. They love all that belongs to their Master. The very footprints of His steps are dear unto them. "His name is as ointment poured forth." (Cant. 1:3.) They are not as many, who are content with coming to church, or with coming to chapel, or with coming to the Lord's table. They go further than that. They "come unto God," and in communion with God they live.

But, more than this, true Christians come unto God in a certain peculiar way. They come unto God *by Christ*—pleading no other plea, mentioning no other name, trusting in no other righteousness, resting on no other foundation than this—that Jesus has lived, Jesus has died, Jesus has risen again for their souls.

"I the chief of sinners am,
But Jesus died for me!"

This is the way by which the true Christian draws near to God.

The way of which I have been speaking is an **OLD** way. It is well near 6,000 years old. All who have ever been saved have drawn near to God by this way. "No man comes unto the Father but by Christ." (John 14:6.)

It is a **GOOD** way. It is easy for the worldly-wise to sneer at and ridicule it. But all the wit and wisdom of man has never devised a way more perfect—more suitable to our wants, and which will bear more thoroughly, all fair and reasonable investigation. It has been to the Jew a stumbling-block; it has been to the Greek foolishness. But all who have known their hearts, and understood what God demands, have found the way made by Jesus Christ a good way, and a way which stands the fullest examination that can be made as to its wisdom. Therein they find justice and mercy met together, righteousness and peace kissing one another—God a holy God, yet loving, kind, and merciful—man knowing himself a poor, weak sinner, yet drawing near to God with boldness, having access with confidence, looking up into His face without fear, and seeing Him in Christ, his Father and his Friend.

Not least it is a **TRIED** way. Thousands and tens of thousands have walked in it, and not one of all that number has ever missed heaven. Apostles, prophets, patriarchs, martyrs, early fathers, reformers, puritans, people of God in every age, and of every people and tongue—holy people of our own day, people like Simeon, Bickersteth, Havelock—have all walked in this way. They have had their battles to fight and their enemies to contend with. They have had to carry the cross, and have found lions in their path. They have had to walk through the valley of the shadow of death, and to contend with Apollyon. They have had to cross at last the cold dark river; but they have walked safely through to the other side, and entered with joy into the celestial city. And now they are all waiting for us to walk in their steps, to follow them, and to share in their glory.

This is the way I want every reader of this paper to walk in. I want you to "come unto God by Jesus Christ." Let there be no mistake as to the object which true ministers of the Gospel have in view. We are not set apart merely to perform a certain round of ordinances —to say prayers, to baptize those that are baptized, to bury those that are buried, to marry those that are married. We are set apart for the grand purpose of proclaiming the one true living way, and inviting you to walk in it. We want to persuade you, by God's blessing, to walk in that way—the tried way, the good way, the old way—and to know the "peace which passes all understanding," which in that way alone is to be found.

II. I pass on now to the second point which I purpose to consider. The text which heads this paper speaks of **the work which the Lord Jesus Christ is ever doing on behalf of true Christians**. I ask special attention to this point. It is one of deep importance to our peace, and to the establishment of our souls in the Christian faith.

There is one great work which the Lord Jesus Christ has done and finished completely. That work is the work of **ATONEMENT**, sacrifice, and substitution. It is the work which He did when He "suffered for sin, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us unto God." (1 Pet. 3:18.) He saw us ruined by the fall—a world of poor, lost, shipwrecked sinners. He saw and He pitied us; and, in compliance with the everlasting counsels of the Eternal Trinity, He came down to the world, to suffer in our stead, and to save us. He

did not sit in heaven pitying us from a distance. He did not stand upon the shore and see the wreck, and behold poor drowning sinners struggling in vain to get to shore. He plunged into the waters Himself! He came down to the wreck, and took part with us in our weakness and infirmity, becoming a man to save our souls. As man, He bore our sins and carried our transgressions. As man, He endured all that man can endure, and went through everything in man's experience, sin only excepted. As man He lived; as man He went to the cross; as man He died. As man He shed His blood, in order that He might save us, poor shipwrecked sinners, and establish a communication between earth and heaven! As man He became a curse for us, in order that He might bridge the gulf, and make a way by which you and I might draw near to God with boldness, and have access to God without fear. In all this work of Christ, remember, there was infinite merit, because He who did it was not only man—but God. Let that never be forgotten! He who wrought out our redemption was perfect man; but He never ceased for a moment to be perfect God.

But there is another great work which the Lord Jesus Christ is yet doing. That work is the work of **INTERCESSION**. The first work of atonement He did once for all—nothing can be added to it; nothing can be taken away from it. It was a finished, perfect work, when Christ offered up the sacrifice upon the cross. No other sacrifice need be offered, beside the sacrifice once made by the Lamb of God, when He shed His own blood at Calvary. But the second work He is ever carrying on at the right hand of God, where He makes intercession for His people. The first work He did on earth when He died upon the cross—the second work He carries on in heaven, at the right hand of God the Father. The first work He did for all mankind, and offers the benefit of it to all the world. The second work He carries on and accomplishes solely and entirely on behalf of His own elect, His people, His believing servants, and His children.

How does our Lord Jesus Christ carry on this work? How shall we comprehend and grasp what is the meaning of Christ's intercession? We must not pry rashly into things unseen. We must not "rush in where angels fear to tread." Yet some faint idea we can obtain of the nature of that continual intercession which Christ ever lives to make on behalf of His believing people.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is doing for His people the work which the Jewish high-priest of old did on behalf of the Israelites. He is acting as the manager, the representative, the mediator in all things between His people and God. He is ever presenting on their behalf His own perfect sacrifice, and His all-sufficient merit, before God the Father. He is ever obtaining daily supplies of fresh mercy and of fresh grace for His poor, weak servants, who need daily mercy for daily sins, and daily grace for daily necessities. He ever prays for them. As He prayed for Simon Peter upon earth, so, in a certain mysterious sense, I believe He prays for His people now. He presents their names before God the Father. He carries their names upon His heart, the place of love, and upon His shoulder, the place of power—as the high-priest carried the names of all the tribes of Israel, from the least to the greatest, when he wore his robes of office. He presents their prayers before God. They go up before God the Father mingled with Christ's all-prevailing intercession, and so are acceptable in God's sight. He lives, in one word, to be the friend, the advocate, the priest, the all-prevailing agent, of all who are His members here upon earth. As their elder brother He acts for them; and all that their souls require, He, in the court of heaven, always lives to make intercession for them.

Does any reader of this paper need a **FRIEND**? In such a world as this, how many hearts there are which ought to respond to that appeal! How many there are who feel, "I am all alone!" How many have found one idol broken after another, one staff failing after another, one fountain dried after another, as they have traveled through the wilderness of this world. If there is one who wants a friend, let that one behold at the right hand of God an unfailing friend, the Lord Jesus Christ. Let that one repose his aching head and weary heart upon the bosom of that unfailing friend, Jesus Christ the Lord. There is one living at God's right hand of matchless tenderness. There is one who never dies. There is one who never fails, never disappoints, never forsakes, never changes His mind, never breaks off friendship. That One, the Lord Jesus, I commend to all who need a friend. No one in a world like this, a fallen world, a world which we find more and more barren, it may be, every year we live—no one ever need be friendless while the Lord Jesus Christ lives to intercede at the right hand of God.

Does any reader of this paper need a **PRIEST**? There can be no true religion without a priest, and no saving Christianity without a confessional. But who is the true priest? Where is the true confessional? There is only one true priest—and that is Christ Jesus the Lord. There is only one real confessional—and that is the throne of grace where the Lord Jesus waits to receive those who come to Him to unburden their hearts in His presence. We can find no better priest than Christ. We need no other Priest. Why need we turn to any priest upon earth, while Jesus is sealed, anointed, appointed, ordained, and commissioned by God the Father, and has an ear ever ready to hear, and a heart ever ready to feel for the poor sinful sons of men? The priesthood is His lawful prerogative. He has assigned that office to no other. Woe be to anyone upon earth who dares to rob Christ of His prerogative! Woe be to the man who takes upon himself the office which Christ holds in His own hands, and has never transferred to anyone born of Adam, upon the face of the globe!

Let us never lose sight of this mighty truth of the Gospel—the intercession and priestly office of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I believe that a firm grasp of this truth is one great safeguard against the errors of the Church of Rome. I believe that losing sight of this great truth is one principal reason why so many have fallen away from the faith in some quarters, have forsaken the creed of their Protestant forefathers, and have gone back to the darkness of Rome. Once firmly established upon this mighty truth—that we have one Priest, and altar—that we have an unfailing, never-dying, ever living Intercessor, who has transferred His office to none—and we shall see that we need turn aside nowhere else. We need not hew for ourselves broken cisterns which can hold no water, when we have in the Lord Jesus Christ a fountain of living waters, ever flowing and free to all. We need not seek any human priest upon earth, when we have a divine Priest living for us in heaven.

Let us beware of regarding the Lord Jesus Christ, only as one that is dead. Here, I believe, many greatly err. They think much of His atoning death, and it is right that they should do so. But we ought not to stop short there. We ought to remember that He not only died and went to the grave—but that He rose again, and ascended up on high, leading captivity captive. We ought to remember that He is now sitting on the right hand of God, to do a work as real, as true, as important to our souls, as the work which He did when He shed His blood. Christ lives, and is not dead. He lives as truly as any one of ourselves. Christ sees us, hears us, knows us, and is acting as a Priest in heaven on behalf of His believing people. The thought of His **life** ought to have as great and important a place in our souls—as the thought of His **death** upon the cross.

III. I will now consider, in the third place, **the comfortable CONCLUSIONS that the Apostle builds upon the everlasting intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ**. We need much comfort and consolation in a world like this. It is no easy matter for a man to carry the cross and reach heaven. There are many enemies to be encountered and overcome. We have often to stand alone. We have at the best times, few with us and many against us. We need cordials and "strong consolation" to sustain and cheer us, and to

preserve us from fainting on the way, as we travel from Egypt into Canaan. The Apostle appears deeply conscious of all this in the words he uses. He says, "He is able to save to the uttermost,"—to save perfectly, to save completely, to save eternally, "all who come unto God by Him, because He ever lives to make intercession for them."

I might say much on the glorious expression which is before us. But I forbear. I will only point out a few of the thoughts which ought to arise in our minds when we hear of Christ's ability to "save to the uttermost." I have not space to dwell on them at length. I rather throw them out as suggestions to supply matter for the private meditation of everyone who reads this paper.

(1) Let us think, for one thing, that **Christ is able to save to the uttermost, notwithstanding the FORMER SINS of any believer**. Those old sins shall never rise again, nor stand up to condemn the child of God. For what says the Scripture, "Christ has not entered into the holy place made with hands—but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." (Heb. 9:24.) Christ, to use a legal phrase, is ever "putting in an appearance" in the court of heaven on behalf of those who believe in Him. There is not a year, nor a month, nor a day, nor an hour, nor a minute—but there is One living in the presence of God, to "make an appearance" there on behalf of all the saints. Christ is ever appearing before God the Father on behalf of the men and women who believe in Him. His blood and His sacrifice are ever in God's sight. His work, His death, His intercession, are always sounding in God the Father's ears.

I remember reading a story in ancient history which may help to illustrate the truth on which I am now dwelling. It is the story of one who was put to trial for a capital charge, at Athens, shortly after the great battle of Marathon. In that famous battle the Athenians had preserved, by their valor, liberty for their little State, against the mighty armies of the Persians. Among those who had distinguished themselves greatly, the brother of the prisoner was one, and had been sorely wounded in the fight. The man was put upon his trial. The evidence against him was strong and unanswerable—there seemed no chance of the prisoner escaping condemnation. Suddenly there came forward one who asked to be heard on his behalf—And who was this? It was his own brother. When he was asked what evidence he had to give, or what reason he had to show why the prisoner at the bar ought not to be found guilty, he simply lifted up his mutilated arms—nothing but stumps—the hands completely cut off, the wounded stumps alone remaining. He was recognized as the man who, at the battle of Marathon, had done prodigies of valor, and in the service of the State had lost his hands. By those wounds he had helped to win the victory which was still ringing in Athenian ears. Those wounds were the only evidence he brought forward. Those wounds were the only plea he advanced why his brother ought to be let go free, and sentence ought not to be passed upon him. And the story states that for the sake of those wounds—for the sake of all his brother had suffered—the prisoner was acquitted. The case was dismissed at once, and the prisoner obtained his liberty.

In like manner the wounds of the Lord Jesus Christ are ever before God the Father. The nail-prints in His hands and feet—the marks of the spear in His side—the thorn marks upon His forehead—the marks of all that He suffered as a slain Lamb, are, in a certain sense, ever before God the Father in heaven. While Christ is in heaven the believer's old sins will never rise in judgment against him. Christ lives, and those old sins will not condemn him. We have an ever-living, ever-interceding Priest. Christ is not dead but alive.

(2) Let us think again, that **Christ is able to save to the uttermost, notwithstanding all the PRESENT WEAKNESS of His believing people**. How great that weakness is, time would fail me to show. There are many of God's children who know their hearts' bitterness, who bewail with strong crying and tears their short-comings, their unprofitableness, and the scanty fruit they bring forth. But let us take comfort in the words of John, "If any man sins, we have an advocate with the Father"—ever present with the Father, "Jesus Christ the righteous—and He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins." (1 John 2:1.) Those weaknesses may well humble us. Those infirmities may well make us walk softly before our God. But while the Lord Jesus Christ lives, those infirmities need not make us entirely despair. We have an ever-living, ever-interceding Priest. Christ is not dead but alive.

(3) Let us think again, that **Jesus Christ is able to save to the uttermost, notwithstanding all the TRIALS that believers have to go through**. Hear what the Apostle Paul says to Timothy, "I suffer—nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." (2 Tim. 1:12.) So long as Jesus Christ lives, the believer in the Lord Jesus Christ may be assured that no affliction shall be allowed to break off the union between him and his risen Head. He may suffer greatly and be sorely tried. But while Christ lives he shall never be forsaken. Neither poverty, nor sickness, nor bereavements, nor separations—shall ever separate Jesus and His believing people. We have an ever-living, ever-interceding Priest. Christ is not dead but alive.

(4) Let us think again, that **Christ is able to save to the uttermost, notwithstanding all the PERSECUTIONS that believers have to go through**. See what is said of Paul, when he met with much opposition at Corinth. We are told that the Lord stood by him in the night, and said, "Don't be afraid, but speak and don't be silent; for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many people in this city."

(Acts 18:9-10.) Remember what He said to Paul at a former time, before his conversion, when He met him on the way to Damascus, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?" (Acts 9:4.) Every injury done to the believer, is an injury done to the living Head in heaven. Every persecution showered down upon the head of the poor child of God here, is known, felt, and, I may add with all reverence, resented, by our Great Elder Brother, who is ever living to make intercession for us. Christ lives, and therefore believers, though persecuted, shall not be destroyed. "In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us." (Rom. 8:37.) We have an ever-living, ever-interceding Priest. Christ is not dead but alive.

(5) Let us think again, that **Christ is able to save to the uttermost, notwithstanding all the TEMPTATIONS of the devil**. Remember that famous passage in the Gospel of Luke, where our Lord, speaking to Peter, says, "Simon, Simon, behold Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat—but I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not." (Luke 22:32.) We may surely believe that intercession like that is still carried on. Those words were spoken as an emblem of what the Lord is ever doing on behalf of His believing people. Satan, the prince of this world, is ever "walking about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour." (1 Pet. 5:8.) But Christ lives; and, blessed be God, while Christ lives, Satan shall not be able to overcome the soul that believes on Him. We have an ever-living, ever-interceding Priest. Christ is not dead but alive.

(6) Let us think again, that **Christ is able to save to the uttermost, notwithstanding the sting of DEATH, and all that death brings with it.** Even David could say, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil—for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff they comfort me." (Ps. 23:4.) Yet David saw through a glass darkly, compared to a believing

Christian. The hour may come when friends can do us no more good, when faithful servants can no longer minister to our needs, when all that love, and kindness, and affection can do to alleviate pain, and make the last journey as easy as possible, can no longer render any service to us. But then the thought that Christ lives—Christ interceding, Christ caring for us, Christ at the right hand of God for us—ought to cheer us. The sting of death will be taken away from the man who leans upon a dying and also a living Savior. Christ never dies. Through faith in that living Savior we shall have a complete victory. We have an ever-living, ever-interceding Priest. Christ is not dead but alive.

(7) Let us think, again, that **Christ is able to save to the uttermost, notwithstanding the terrors of the JUDGMENT DAY**. Mark how Paul rests upon this in the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans—in that wonderful conclusion to that wonderful chapter—a chapter unrivaled in the Word of God for privilege, beginning with "no condemnation," and concluding with "no separation!" Observe how he dwells upon Christ's intercession in connection with the judgment of the last day. After saying, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God who justifies," he goes on, "Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, yes rather, who is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us." (Rom. 8:33, 34.) The thought of Christ's intercession, no less than His dying and rising again, was one ground of the Apostle Paul's confidence in looking forward to that great day. His strong consolation was the recollection of a living Christ. That consolation is for us as well as for Paul. We have an ever-living, ever-interceding Priest. Christ is not dead but alive.

(8) Let us think, lastly, and above all, that **Christ is able save to the uttermost throughout all ETERNITY**. "I am He," He says, "who lives, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore." (Rev. 1:18.) Christ, the root of the believer never dies—and the branches, therefore, shall never die. Christ being "raised from the dead, dies no more; death has no more dominion over Him." (Rom. 6:9.) He lives, that all who trust in Him may receive honor and glory to all eternity; and because He lives, His believing people shall never die. "Because I live," to use His own words, "you shall live also." (John 14:19.) We have an ever-living, ever-interceding Priest. Christ is not dead but alive.

Would you know the secret of the security for the perseverance of God's own people? Would you know why it is that Christ's sheep shall never perish, and none shall ever pluck them out of His hand? It is a miraculous thing. When you look at the believer's heart, listen to the believer's prayers, mark the believer's confessions, when you see how a just man may fall, sometimes seven times—when you see, with all this, the believer's perseverance, it is a marvel indeed. To carry a candle in a stormy night, when winds and gusty blasts are blowing from every quarter—to carry it still burning, steadily burning, along the street—this is a wonderful achievement. To go over a stormy sea in a little boat—to mount billow after billow, and not see the waves breaking over the boat, and overturning it—this is well-near a miracle. To see a little child tottering along the crowded street, a child some three or four years old—to see it tottering on and making its way in safety, from one end of the town to the other—this is a mighty marvel.

But after all, what is this but the life, and history, and experience of every true Christian? Though he falls, he rises again; though he is cast down, he is not destroyed. He goes on from one position to another, like the moon upon a stormy night, plunging from one cloud into another, yet by-and-by shining out again and walking in brightness. What is the secret of it all? It is the continual intercession of a mighty Friend at the right hand of God—a Friend who never slumbers and never sleeps—a Friend who cares for the believer, morning, noon, and night. The intercession of Christ is the secret of the perseverance of the Christian.

We shall do well to study the words of the Apostle in the 5th chapter of Romans, "Much more then," he says, "being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." Mark the connection, "Being already justified by His death, we shall be saved"—and saved by what? "By His life," by His ever living to make intercession for us. (Rom. 5:10.)

Wise and beautiful is the comparison made by that master of allegory, John Bunyan, in the "Pilgrim's Progress." He tells us how Christian was taken into the Interpreter's house, and how the Interpreter showed him many things wonderful and instructive. In one place he took him into a room where there was a fire burning, and showed him one ever pouring water upon that fire, and yet the water did not quench the fire. However much water he poured on, still the fire went on burning steadily! Then said the Interpreter, "Do you know what this means?" When Christian did not know, he took him behind the fire, and showed him one pouring on oil out of a vessel. This oil fed the fire, and made it burn more fiercely, notwithstanding all the water that was poured upon it. Then the Interpreter told him that this was a picture of Jesus Christ's intercession. That fire was the fire of grace in the believer's heart. He who poured on the water was the enemy of souls, was the devil. But He who poured on the oil, standing behind the fire, was the Lord Jesus Christ, who by continual intercession and the supply of His Spirit, secretly and unseen by man, kept alive His own work in the believer's heart, and did not allow Satan and all his agents to get a victory over Him.

Would you know the secret of the believer's boldness in prayer? It is a marvel how a man that feels his sin so deeply as the believer does, can speak with the confidence the believer frequently does. How one that acknowledges he is "wretched, miserable, poor, blind, naked," ruined, undone—who often does what he ought not to do, and leaves undone what he ought to do, and finds no spiritual health in him—how such a one as this can go before God with confidence, pour out his heart before Him freely, ask from Him what he requires day after day and not feel afraid—this is wonderful indeed. What is the secret of it? It is the intercession of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, whereby the true Christian knows his prayers are made acceptable, and received in the court of heaven. What is the believer's prayer in itself? A poor, weak thing, unfit to rise above the ground. I know nothing it is more like, than a bank-note without the signature at the bottom. What is the value of that bank-note without the signature? Nothing at all. Once get a very few letters traced in ink upon the bottom of that bank-note, and that which was a piece of waste paper a few moments before, becomes worth, it may be, many hundred pounds, through the signature being attached to it. So it is with the intercession of Christ. He signs, endorses, and presents the believer's petitions; and through His all-prevailing intercession they are heard on high, and bring down blessings upon the Christian's soul.

Would you know the secret of daily comfort in all the toil, and business, and distractions we have to go through? We all know that they who have to do work in any secular calling, find the work oftentimes a sore burden to their souls. Oftentimes in the morning they feel, "How can I get through this day without a defiled conscience, without being sorely troubled and tempted to forget my God?" How shall a man get through the day with comfort, fill his office in the world, do his duty in the position to which God has called him? Let him lay hold upon the intercession of Jesus Christ. Let him grasp the great thought, that Christ not merely died for him—but rose again, and still lives for him.

It is recorded of a Christian soldier, who died in the Commonwealth wars, that a common prayer of his before leaving his tent was something of this kind, "Lord, I am going this day to do the duty whereunto I am called. I may sometimes forget You. I cannot have my thoughts at all times as fully fixed upon You as I wish. But, Lord, if I this day forget You—may You not forget me." This is the kind of thought which every believer should lay hold upon who has much to do in the business of this world. Rising from his bed in the morning, going from his room every morning, leaving his house every morning, let him bear in mind, "There is One living in heaven who intercedes for me, while I am following my lawful calling. Although I may be absorbed in business, and obliged to give up all the powers of my poor weak mind to it, still there lives One who never forgets me." He may say, as the old soldier did, "Lord—if I this day forget You—may You not forget me."

Last of all, would you know the secret of comfort in looking forward to that heaven whereunto every believer desires to go? I believe there are few children of God who do not sometimes feel anxious, troubled, and cast down, when they think quietly about the eternal habitation towards which they are traveling. The nature of it, the manner of it, the employments of it, their own apparent unfitness for it—will sometimes perplex their minds. These thoughts will sometimes come across the believer's mind, especially in times of sickness, filling him with heaviness, and making his heart sink. Now I know no remedy against these thoughts to be compared to the recollection of the continual intercession of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Christ is gone into heaven to be the "forerunner" of a people who are to follow after Him. He is gone "to prepare a place for them"—and the place whereto He goes is the place whereto His people are to go by-and-by. When they go there they will find all things made ready, a place for everyone, and a fitting and proper place, too, through the intercession of their Lord and Savior.

There never will be a time when their company will not be liked in heaven. There never will be a time when their old sins—the sins of their youth and their backslidings, their wickedness before conversion, their profligacy, it may be, before the grace of God came into their hearts—there never will be a day when all these sins shall come up against them, and make them feel abashed and ashamed in heaven. Christ will be in the midst. Christ will ever intercede for them. Where Christ is, there His people will be. Where He lives, His perfect merit, His spotless righteousness, His intercession, will make them perfect in the sight of God the Father. They will stand in heaven, seen in Christ, clothed in Christ, members of Christ, part of Christ, and so will possess a firm and solid and eternal title to the eternal joys which shall be hereafter.

I will now conclude this paper by a few words of **APPLICATION** to all into whose hands it may fall. My heart's desire and prayer to God is that the words I have been writing may yet bear fruit in some souls. In order that they may do so, I offer a few words of faithful and affectionate exhortation.

(1) I would offer counsel, first, to all who are anxious and troubled respecting their soul's salvation, and yet know not what to do. If you are such a person, I charge you and entreat you, I beseech you and invite you—to come into the way of which I have been speaking in this paper. I beseech you to come to God by the old and tried way—the way of faith in Jesus Christ. Draw near to God, pleading the name of Jesus. Begin this very day to cry mightily unto God, in the name of Jesus, on behalf of your soul. Don't say that you have anything to plead for yourself. You have nothing to plead. Your life, your thoughts, your ways—all alike condemn you. Say nothing about yourself but this—that you are a sinner, a great sinner, a guilty sinner, a condemned sinner; but because you are a sinner, you turn to God. Come to Him in the name of Jesus, saying, you have heard that through Jesus a sinner may come near Him. Tell Him that you are a sinner, a great sinner, and an unworthy one. But tell Him that you come in the faith of His promises, in the confidence of His own Bible invitation; and in the name of Jesus, and for the sake of Jesus, and on account of Jesus—you ask to be received, heard, pardoned, forgiven, and accepted. Tell Him that you wish to have your name—even that name of yours connected hitherto with worldliness, thoughtlessness, carelessness, and sin—added to the list of God's dear children.

Will you say that you are afraid to come to God? Your fear is needless. You shall not be cast out, if you will but come in the way of faith in Christ. Our God is not "an austere man." Our Father in heaven is full of mercy, love, and grace. I yield to none in desire to exalt the love, mercy, and tenderness of God the Father. I will never concede, for one moment, that what is called an evangelical ministry, will not magnify the mercy, love, and compassion of God the Father as much as any ministry on earth. We know that God is holy. We know He is just. We believe that He is angry with those who go on still in sin. But we also believe that to those who draw near to Him in Christ Jesus, He is most merciful, most loving, most tender, and most compassionate. We tell you that the cross of Jesus Christ was the result and consequence of that love. The cross was not the cause and reason of God's mercy—but the result and consequence of the everlasting love of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, towards a poor, lost, and bankrupt world. Draw near in faith, by that living way, Christ Jesus, to the Father. Think not for a moment—the unworthy thought shall never prove true—that so drawing near to God the Father by Christ, God the Father will not receive you. He will receive you gladly. As the father did to the prodigal son when he ran to meet him—fell on his neck and kissed him, so will God the Father do to that soul who draws near to Him in the name of Christ.

(2) In the next place, I would cheer those readers who have walked in the way of God, and yet are afraid of falling. Why should you be afraid? What should make you fear? What should make you suppose that you shall ever be allowed to fall away, while Jesus Christ lives at the right hand of God to make intercession for you? All the power of the Lord Jesus Christ is pledged upon your behalf. He has undertaken to care for all the flock that God the Father has committed into His hand. He will care for it. He has cared for it. He went to the cross for it. He died for it. He is ever at the right hand of Gcd, and has not ceased to care for it. Every member of that flock—the weakest, the feeblest sheep or lamb—is equally dear to the Lord and Savior, and none shall pluck the least of Christ's sheep out of God's hand. Can you stop the tides of the sea, and make them not rise at your command? Can you make the waters stop when the tide begins to come? Can you prevent the sun in heaven going down in the west, or prevent the same sun from rising tomorrow morning in the east? You cannot do it—these things are impossible. And all the power of devils, all the power of the world, and all the enemies of the Christian, shall not be able to pluck out of the hand of Jesus Christ one single soul who has been brought by the Spirit's teaching to true union with Christ, and for whom Jesus Christ intercedes. The days of Christ's weakness have passed away. He was "crucified through weakness," and was weak on our account when He went to the cross. (2 Cor. 13:4.) The days of His weakness are over—the days of His power have begun. Pilate shall no more condemn Him—He shall come to condemn Pilate. All power is His in heaven and earth, and all that power is engaged on behalf of His believing people.

(3) Finally, let me gladden all believers who read this paper, by reminding them that Christ is yet to come again. The

Great High Priest is yet to come forth from the Holy of Holies, to bless all the people who have believed on Him. One part of His work He did when He died upon the cross; another part of His work He is still doing—interceding for us at God's right hand. But the third part of the High Priest's office remains yet to be done. He has yet to come forth from the Holy of Holies, as the high-priest did upon the day of atonement—to come forth from within the veil to bless the people. That part of Christ's work is yet to come. He is now gone into heaven itself—He is within the Holy of Holies—He is gone behind the veil. But our Great High Priest—a greater one than Aaron—shall yet come forth one day. He shall come in power and great glory. He shall come as He left the world, when He went up in the clouds of heaven. He shall come to gather from the north and from the south, from the east and from the west, all who have loved His name and confessed Him before people, all who have heard His voice and followed Him. He shall gather them together into one happy company. There shall be no more weakness, and no more sorrow, no more parting, and no more separation, no more sickness, and no more death, no more disputing, and no more controversy, no more fighting with the world, the flesh, and devil. And, best of all, no more sin. That day shall be a happy day indeed, when the High Priest comes forth to do the third, last, and completing part of His work—to bless His believing people. "He who testifies these things says, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!" (Rev. 22:20.)

Are You Asleep?

J. C. Ryle

"Awake, you who sleep." Ephesians 5:14

I put before you now a simple question. Look through the pages of this paper and you will soon see why I ask it. "Are you asleep about your soul?"

There are many who have the *name* of Christians—but not the *character* which should go with the name. God is not King of their hearts. "They mind earthly things."

Such people are often quick and clever about the affairs of this life. They are, many of them, good men of business, good at their daily work, good masters, good servants, good neighbors, good subjects of the Queen—all this I fully allow. But it is the *eternal* part of them which I speak of; it is their never dying souls. And about that, if a man may judge by the little they do for it—they are careless, thoughtless, reckless, and unconcerned. They are asleep.

I do not say that God and salvation are subjects which never come across their minds—but this I say—they have not the uppermost place there. Neither do I say that they are all alike in their lives; some of them doubtless go further in sin than others; but this I say—they have all turned every one to his own way, and that way is not God's. I know no rule by which to judge of a man's estate—but the Bible. Now when I look at the Bible I can come to only one conclusion about these people—they are asleep about their souls.

These people do not see the sinfulness of **sin**, and their own lost condition by nature. They appear to make light of breaking God's commandments, and to care little whether they live according to His law or not. Yet God says that sin is the transgression of the law—that His commandment is exceeding broad—that every imagination of the natural heart is evil—that sin is the thing He cannot bear, He hates it—that the wages of sin is death, and the soul that sins shall die. Surely they are asleep.

Is this the state of your soul? Remember my question. ARE YOU ASLEEP?

These people do not see their need of a **Savior**. They appear to think it an easy matter to get to heaven, and that God will of course be merciful to them at last, some way or other, though they do not exactly know how. Yet God says that He is just and holy, and never changes—that Christ is the only way, and none can come unto the Father but by Him—that without His blood there can be no forgiveness of sin—that a man without Christ is a man without hope—that those who would be saved must believe on Jesus and come to Him, and that he who believes not shall he damned. Surely they are asleep!

Once more I say, is this the state of your soul? Remember my question. ARE YOU ASLEEP?

These people do not see the necessity of **holiness**. They appear to think it quite enough to go on as others do, and live like their neighbors. And as for praying and Bible-reading, making conscience of words and actions, studying truthfulness and gentleness, humility and charity, and keeping separate from the world—they are things they do not seem to value at all. Yet God says that without holiness no man shall see the Lord—that there shall enter into heaven nothing which defiles—that His people must be a separated people, zealous of good works. Surely they are asleep!

Once more I say, is this the state of your soul? Remember my question. ARE YOU ASLEEP?

Worst of all, these people do not appear to feel their **danger**. They walk on with their eyes shut, and seem not to know, that the end of their path is hell! Some dreamers imagine that they are rich—when they are poor, or full—when they are hungry, or well—when they are sick, and awake to find it all a mistake! And this is the way that many dream about their souls. They flatter themselves they will have peace—and there will be no peace; they imagine that they are all right—and in truth they will find that they are all wrong. Surely they are asleep!

Once more I say, is this the state of your soul? Remember my question. ARE YOU ASLEEP?

If conscience pricks you, and tells you you are yet asleep, what can I say to arouse you? Your soul is in awful peril. Without a mighty change it will be lost. When shall that change once be?

You are dying, and not ready to depart—you are going to be judged, and not prepared to meet God—your sins are not forgiven—your person is not justified—your heart is not renewed. Heaven itself would be no happiness to you if you got there, for the Lord of heaven

is not your friend. What pleases Him does not please you; what He dislikes gives you no pain. His word is not your Counselor; His way is not your delight; His law is not your guide. You care little for hearing of Him—you know nothing of speaking with Him. To be forever in His company would be a thing you could not endure; and the society of saints and angels would he a weariness, and not a joy. At the rate you live at, the Bible might never have been written, and Christ might never have died, the Apostles were foolish, the New Testament Christians madmen, and the salvation of the Gospel a needless thing. Oh, awake! and sleep no more.

Think not to say you cannot believe your case is so bad, or the danger so great, or God so particular. I answer—the devil has been putting this lying delusion into people's hearts for nearly six thousand years. It has been his grand snare ever since the day he said to Eve, "You shall not surely die." Do not be so weak as to be taken in by it. God never failed yet to punish sin, and He never will—He never failed to make His word good, and you will find this to your cost, one day, except you repent. Reader, awake—awake!

Think not to say you are a member of Christ's visible church, and therefore feel no doubt you are as good a Christian as others. I answer—this will only make your case worse, if you have nothing else to plead. You may he written down and registered in the church roll—you may be reckoned in the number of saints; you may sit for years under the sound of the Gospel; you may use holy forms and even come to the Lord's table at regular seasons; and still, with all this, unless *sin* is hateful, and *Christ* precious, and your heart a temple of the Holy Spirit—you will prove in the end no better than a lost soul! Church membership will never save an unholy man. Reader, awake—awake!

Think not to say you have been baptized, and so feel confident you are born of God, and have His grace within you. I answer—you have none of the marks which John has told us, in his first epistle, which distinguish such a person. I do not see you confessing that Jesus is the Christ, overcoming the world—not practicing sin—loving your brother—doing righteousness—keeping yourself from the wicked one. How then can I believe that you are born of God? If God were your Father, you would love Christ; if you were God's son, you would be led by His Spirit. I want stronger evidences. Show me some *repentance* and *faith*; show me a life hidden with Christ in God; show me a spiritual and sanctified life—these are the fruits I want to see, if I am to believe you have the root of the matter in you, and are a living branch of the true vine. But without these—your baptism will only add to your condemnation! Reader, awake—awake!

I speak strongly, because I feel deeply. Time is too short, life is too uncertain, to allow of relying on religious ceremonies. At the risk of offending, I use great plainness of speech. I cannot bear the thought of hearing you condemned in the great day of judgment; of seeing your face in the crowd on God's left hand, among those who are helpless, hopeless, and beyond the reach of mercy. I cannot bear such thoughts—they grieve me to the heart. Before the day of grace is past, and the day of vengeance begins, I call upon you to open your eyes and repent. Oh, consider your ways and be wise. Awake—awake! Why will you die!

This day, as the ambassador of Christ, I beg you to be reconciled to God. The Lord Jesus who came into the world to save sinners—Jesus the appointed Mediator between God and man—Jesus who loved us and gave Himself for us—Jesus sends you a message of peace—He says, "Come unto Me!"

"Come is a precious word indeed, and ought to draw you. You have sinned against heaven—heaven has not sinned against you. Yet see how the first step towards peace is on heaven's side. It is the Lord's message—"Come unto Me."

"Come" is a word of merciful invitation. Does not the Lord Jesus seem to say, "Sinner, I am waiting for you—I am not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. As I live, I have no pleasure in the death of him who dies in sin. I would have all men saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. Judgment is my strange work—I delight in mercy. I offer the water of life to everyone who will take it. I stand at the door of your heart and knock. For long time I have spread out my hands to you. I wait to be gracious. There is yet room in my Father's house. My long-suffering waits for more to come to the mercy-seat before the last trumpet is blown—for more wanderers to return before the door is closed forever. Oh, sinner, come to Me!"

"Come" is a word of promise and encouragement. Does not the Lord Jesus seem to say, "Sinner, I have gifts ready for you—I have something of everlasting importance to bestow upon your soul. I have received gifts for men, even for the rebellious. I have a free pardon for the most ungodly—a full fountain for the most unclean—a white garment for the most defiled—a new heart for the most hardened—healing for the broken-hearted—rest for the heavy-laden, joy for those who mourn. Oh, sinner, it is not for nothing that I invite you! All things are ready. Come—come unto Me."

Hear the voice of the Son of God. See that you refuse not Him who speaks. Come away from *sin*, which can never give you real pleasure, and will be bitter at the last! Come out from a *world* which will never satisfy you—come unto Christ! Come, with all your sins, however many and however great—however far you may have gone from God, and however provoking your conduct may have been. Come as you are—unfit, unfit, unprepared as you may think yourself—you will gain no fitness by delay. Come at once—come to the Lord Jesus Christ!

How indeed shall you escape if you neglect so great salvation? Where will you appear if you make light of the blood of Christ, and despise the Spirit of grace? It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, but never so fearful as when men fall from under the Gospel. *The saddest road to hell* is that which runs under the pulpit, past the Bible, and through the midst of warnings and invitations. Oh, beware, lest like Israel at Kadesh, you mourn over your mistake when it is too late; or, like Judas Iscariot, find out your sin when there is no space for repentance!

Arise, and call upon the Lord. Be not like Esau—sell not eternal blessings for worldly vanities. Surely the time past may suffice you to have been careless and prayerless, Godless and Christless, worldly and earthly-minded. Surely the time to come may be given to your soul.

Pray, I beseech you, that you may be enabled to put off the old ways and the old habits, and that you may become a new man. I yield to none in wishes for your happiness, and my best wish is that you may be made a new creature in Christ Jesus. This is a better thing than riches, or health, or honor, or learning. A man may get to heaven without these—but he cannot get there without conversion. Verily if you die without having been born again—you had far better never have been born at all. No man really lives until he lives unto God.

I leave my question with you. The Lord grant that it may prove a word in season to your soul. My heart's desire and prayer to God is that you may be saved. Awake, you who sleep, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light. Arise, O sleeper and call upon God. There is yet hope. Forsake not your mercies. Do not lose your own soul!

Victory!

by J. C. Ryle

"For everyone who has been born of God **overcomes the world**. And this is the victory that has **overcome the world**—our faith. Who is it that **overcomes the world**, but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?" (1 John 5:4-5)

It ought to be our practice, if we have any religion, to examine the state of our souls from time to time, and to find out whether we are "right in the sight of God" (Acts 8:21).

Are we true Christians? Are we likely to go to heaven when we die? Are we born again—born of the Spirit—born of God? These are searching questions, which imperatively demand an answer; and the text which heads this paper will help us to give that answer. If we are born of God, we shall have one great mark of character, we shall "overcome the world."

In opening up this subject, there are three points to which I propose to invite attention in this paper.

I. In the first place, let us consider **the name by which John describes a true Christian**. He calls him six times over, in his First Epistle, a man "born of God," and once, "begotten of God."

II. In the second place, let us consider **the special mark which John supplies of a man born of God**. He says that he "overcomes the world."

III. In the last place, let us consider **the secret of the true Christian's victory over the world**. He says, "This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith."

Let me clear the way by expressing an earnest hope that no reader will turn away from the subject before us, under the idea that it is a controversial one. I doubt whether any doctrine of the Bible has suffered so much from impatient dislike of controversy as that which is contained in the phrase, "Born of God." Yet that phrase contains a great foundation verity of Christianity, which can never be neglected without damage. Deep down, below strifes and contentions about the effect of baptism, and the meaning of liturgical services, there lies in those three words one of the primary rocks of the everlasting gospel—even the inward work of the Holy Spirit on the soul of man.

The atoning work of Christ FOR us, and the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit WITHIN US, are the two corner-stones of saving religion. Surely a truth which the last writer of the New Testament brings forward no less than seven times in the five chapters of one Epistle—a truth which he binds up seven times with some of the distinguishing characteristics of the Christian man—such a truth ought not to be disliked or timidly passed by. Surely it may be handled profitably without entering upon debatable ground. I shall attempt so to handle it in this paper.

I. First and foremost, I ask my readers to notice **the NAME by which John describes a true Christian**. Here, and in five other places, he speaks of him as one **"born of God."**

Let us briefly analyze this rich and wonderful expression. The natural birth of any child of man, in the humblest rank of life, is an important event. It is the bringing into being of a creature who will outlive sun, moon, stars, and earth, and may one day develop a character which shall shake the world. How much more important must spiritual birth be! How much must lie beneath that figurative phrase, "Born of God!"

(a) To be "born of God" is to be the SUBJECT OF AN INWARD CHANGE of heart, so complete, that it is like passing into a new existence. It is the introduction into the human soul of a seed from heaven, a new principle, a Divine nature, a new will. Certainly it is no outward bodily alteration; but it is no less certain that it is an entire alteration of the inward man. It adds no new faculties to our minds; but it gives an entirely new bent and bias to our old ones. The tastes and opinions of one "born of God," his views of sin, of the world, of the Bible, of God, and of Christ, are so thoroughly new, that he is to all intents and purposes what Paul calls "a new creature." In fact, as the Church Catechism truly says, it is "a death unto sin and a new birth unto righteousness."

(b) To be "born of God" is a change which is THE PECULIAR GIFT OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST to all His believing people. It is He who plants in their hearts the Spirit of adoption, whereby they cry, 'Abba Father', and makes them members of His mystical body, and sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty (Rom. 8:15). It is written—"He quickens whom He will." "As the Father has life in Himself, so has He given to the Son to have life in Himself" (John 5:21-26). In short, as the first chapter of John teaches, so it will be as long as the world stands—"To as many as received Him He gave power to become the sons of God, even to those who believe on His name; who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:12-13).

(c) To be "born of God" is a change which unquestionably is VERY MYSTERIOUS. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself tells us that in well-known words—"The wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound thereof, but can not tell whence it comes, and where it goes; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." (John 3:8). But we must all confess there are a thousand things in the natural world around us which we cannot explain, and yet believe. We cannot explain how our wills act daily on our members, and make them move, or rest, at our discretion; yet no one ever thinks of disputing the fact. The wisest philosopher cannot tell us the origin of physical life. What right, then, have we to complain because we cannot comprehend the beginning of spiritual life in him that is" born of God"?

(d) But to be "born of God" is a change which WILL ALWAYS BE SEEN AND FELT. I do not say that he who is the subject of it will invariably understand his own feelings. On the contrary, those feelings are often a cause of much anxiety, conflict, and inward strife.

Nor do I say that a person "born of God" will always become at once an established Christian, a Christian in whose life and ways nothing weak and defective can be observed by others. But this I do say, the Holy Spirit never works in a person's soul without producing some perceptible results in character and conduct. The true grace of God is like light and fire—it cannot be hidden; it is never idle; it never sleeps. I can find no such thing as totally "dormant" grace in Scripture. It is written, "Whoever is born of God does not commit sin; for His seed remains in him—and he cannot sin, because he is born of God" (1 John 3:9).

(e) To crown all, to be born of God is a thing which is of ABSOLUTE NECESSITY to our salvation. Without it we can neither know God rightly and serve Him acceptably in the life that now is, nor dwell with God comfortably in the life that is to come. There are two things which are indispensably needful before any child of Adam can be saved. One is the forgiveness of his sins through the blood of Christ—the other is the renewal of his heart by the Spirit of Christ. Without the forgiveness we have no title to heaven—without the renewed heart we could not enjoy heaven. These two things are never separate. Every forgiven man is also a renewed man, and every renewed man is also a forgiven man. There are two standing maxims of the gospel which should never be forgotten—one is, "He who believes not the Son, shall not see life;" the other is, "If any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His" (John 3:36; Rom. 8:9). Quaint, but most true, is the old saying—"Born once—die twice—and die forever. Born twice—never die—and live forever." Without a natural birth we would never have lived and moved on earth—without a spiritual birth we shall never live and dwell in heaven. It is written, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3).

And now, before I pass away from the name which John gives in this text to the true Christian, let us not forget to ask ourselves what we know experimentally about being "born of God." Let us search and try our hearts with honest self-examination, and seek to find out whether there is any real work of the Holy Spirit in our inward man. Far be it from me to encourage the slightest approach to hypocrisy, self-conceit, and fanaticism. Nor do I want any one to look for that angelic perfection in himself on earth, which will only be found in heaven. All I say is, let us never be content with the "outward and visible signs" of Christianity, unless we also know something of 'inward and spiritual grace." All I ask, and I think I have a right to ask, is, that we should often take this First Epistle of John in our hands, and try to find out by its light whether we are "born of God."

One more thing let me add, which I dare not leave unsaid. Let us never be ashamed, in a day of abounding heresy, to contend earnestly for the Godhead and personality of the Holy Spirit, and the reality of His work on souls. Just as we clasp to our hearts the doctrine of the Trinity, and the proper Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, as great foundation verities of the gospel, so let us grasp tightly the truth about God the Holy Spirit. Let us ever give Him in our religion the place and dignity which Scripture assigns to Him. Wherever in the providence of God we may be called to worship, let our first inquiry be, "Where is the Lamb?" and our second, "Where is the Holy Spirit?" We know there have been many martyrs for Jesus Christ and the true doctrine of justification. "A day may come," said a remarkable Christian, "when there will need to be martyrs for the Holy Spirit, and His work within the soul."

II. The second thing I will now ask my readers to notice in my text is, **the special MARK which John supplies of the man who is a true Christian**. He says, "Whoever is born of God overcomes the world." In short, to use the words of that holy man Bishop Wilson—the Apostle teaches that "the only certain proof of regeneration is victory."

We are all apt to flatter ourselves, that if we are duly enrolled members of that great ecclesiastical corporation, the Church of England, our souls cannot be in much danger. We secretly stifle the voice of conscience with the comfortable thought, "I am a Churchman—why should I be afraid?"

Yet common sense and a little reflection might remind us that there are no privileges without corresponding responsibilities. Before we repose in self-satisfied confidence on our Church membership, we shall do well to ask ourselves whether we bear in our characters the marks of living membership of Christ's mystical body. Do we know anything of renouncing the devil and all his works, and crucifying the flesh with its affections and lusts? And, to bring this matter to a point, as it is set before us in our text, do we know anything of "overcoming the world"?

The three great spiritual enemies of man are the **world**, the **flesh**, and the **devil**. It is hard to say which does most harm to the soul. The last day alone will settle that point. But I venture boldly to say, that at no former period has "the world" been so dangerous, and so successful in injuring Christ's Church, as it is just now. Every age is said to have its own peculiar epidemic disease. I suspect that "worldliness" is the peculiar plague of Christendom in our own era. That same **love** of the world's good things and good opinion—that same **dread** of the world's opposition and blame—which proved so fatal to Judas Iscariot, and Demas, and many more in the beginning of the gospel era—each is just as powerful in the nineteenth century as it was in the first, and a hundred times more.

Even in days of persecution, under heathen emperors, these spiritual enemies slew their thousands, and in days of ease, and luxury, and free thought, like our own, they slay their tens of thousands. The subtle influence of the world, nowadays, seems to infect the very air we breathe. It creeps into families like an angel of light, and leads myriads captive, who never know that they are slaves. The enormous increase of English wealth, and consequent power of self-indulgence, and the immense growth of a passionate relish for recreations and amusements of all kinds; the startling rise and progress of a so-called liberality of opinion, which refuses to say anybody is wrong, whatever he does, and loudly asserts that, as in the days of the Judges, every one should think and do what is right in his own eyes, and never be checked, mall these strange phenomena of our age give the world an amazing additional power, and make it doubly needful for Christ's ministers to cry aloud, "Beware of the world!"

In the face of this aggravated danger, we must never forget that the word of the living God changes not—"Do not love the world!" "Do not be conformed to this world!" "Friendship with the world is enmity with God!"—these mighty sayings of God's statute-book remain still unrepealed (1 John 2:15; Rom. 12:2; James 4:4). The true Christian strives daily to obey them, and proves the vitality of his religion by his obedience. **It is as true now as it was eighteen hundred years ago, that the man "born of God" will be a man who, more or less, resists and overcomes the world.**

Such a man does not "overcome" by retiring into a corner, and becoming a monk or a hermit, but by boldly meeting his foes and conquering them. He does not refuse to fill his place in society, and do his duty in that position to which God has called him. But though "in" the world, he is not "of" the world. He uses it, but does not abuse it. He knows when to say No, when to refuse compliance, when to halt, when to say, "Thus far have I gone, but I go no further." He is not wholly absorbed either in the business or the pleasures of life, as if they were the sum total of existence. Even in innocent things he keeps the rein on his tastes and inclinations,

and does not let them run away with him. He does not live as if life was made up of recreation, or money-getting, or politics, or scientific pursuits, and as if there were no life to come.

Everywhere, and in every condition, in public and in private, in business or in amusements, he carries himself like a "citizen of a better country," and as one who is not entirely dependent on temporal things. Like the noble Roman ambassador before Pyrrhus, he is alike unmoved by the elephant or by the gold. You will neither bribe him, nor frighten him, nor allure him into neglecting his soul. This is one way in which the true Christian proves the reality of his Christianity. This is the way in which the man "born of God" overcomes the world.

I am fully aware that, at first sight, the things I have just said may appear "hard sayings." **The standard of true Christianity which I have just raised may seem extravagant, and extreme, and unattainable in this life.** I grant most freely that to "overcome" in the fashion I have described needs a constant fight and struggle—and that all such fighting is naturally unpleasant to flesh and blood. It is disagreeable to find ourselves standing alone—and running counter to the opinions of all around us. We do not like to appear narrow-minded, and exclusive, and uncharitable, and uncongenial, and ill-natured, and out of harmony with our fellows. We naturally love ease and popularity, and hate collisions in religion, and if we hear we cannot be true Christians without all this fighting and warring, we are tempted to say to ourselves, "I will give it up in despair." I speak from bitter experience. I have known and felt all this myself.

To all who are tempted in this way—and none, I believe, are so much tempted as the young—to all who are disposed to shrink back from any effort to overcome the world, as a thing impossible—to all such I offer a few words of friendly exhortation. Before you turn your back on the enemy, and openly confess that he is too strong for you—before you bow down to the strong man, and let him place his foot on your neck, let me put you in remembrance of some things which, perhaps, you are forgetting.

Is it not true that myriads of men and women, no stronger than yourself, have fought this battle with the world, and won it? Think of the mighty armies of Christian soldiers who have walked in the narrow way in the last eighteen centuries, and proved more than conquerors. The same Divine Captain, the same armor, the same helps and aids by which they overcame, are ready for you. Surely if they got the victory, you may hope to do the same.

Again, is it not true that this fight with the world is a thing of absolute necessity? Does not our Master say, "Whoever does not bear his cross, and come after Me, cannot be My disciple"? (Luke 14:27). "I came not to send peace on earth, but a sword" (Mat. 10:34). Here, at any rate, we cannot remain neutral, and sit still. Such a line of conduct may be possible in the strife of nations, but it is utterly impossible in that conflict which concerns the soul. The boasted policy of non-interference, the masterly inactivity which pleases so many statesmen, the plan of keeping quiet and letting things alone—all this will never do in the Christian warfare.

To be at peace with the world, the flesh, and the devil, is to be at enmity with God, and in the broad way that leads to destruction. We have no choice or option. The promises to the Seven Churches in Revelation are only "to him that overcomes." We must fight or be lost. We must conquer or die eternally. We must put on the whole armor of God. "He who has no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one" (Eph. 6:11; Luke 22:36).

Surely, in the face of such considerations as these, I may well charge and entreat all who are inclined to make peace with the world, and not resist it, to awake to a sense of their danger. Awake and cast aside the chains which indolence or love of popularity are gradually weaving round you. Awake before it is too late—before repeated worldly acts have formed habits, and habits have crystallized into character, and you have become a helpless slave.

When men on every side are volunteering for war, and ready to go forth to battle for a corruptible crown, stand up and resolve to do it for one that is incorruptible. The world is not so strong an enemy as you think, if you will only meet it boldly, and use the right weapons. The imagined difficulties will vanish, or melt away like snow, as you approach them. The lions you now dread will prove chained. Hundreds could tell you that they served the world for years, and found at last that its rewards were hollow and unreal, and its so-called good things could neither satisfy nor save.

But who, on the other hand, ever fought God's battle manfully against the world and failed to find a rich reward? No doubt the experience of Christian pilgrims is very various, Not all have "an abundant entrance" into the kingdom, and some are "saved so as by fire" (2Pe. 1:11; 1Co. 3:15). But none, I am persuaded, have such joy and peace in believing, and travel to the celestial city with such light hearts, as those who come out boldly, and overcome the love and fear of the world. Such men the King of kings delights to honor while they live; and when they die, their testimony is that of old Bunyan's hero, Valiant—" I am going to my Father's house; and though with great difficulty I have got here, yet now I do not repent me of all the troubles I have been at to arrive where I am."

III. The third and last thing which I shall ask you to notice in this text is, **the secret of the true Christian's VICTORY over the world**. John reveals that secret to us twice over, as if he would emphasize his meaning, and make it unmistakable—"This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our FAITH. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who BELIEVES that Jesus is the Son of God?"

Simplicity is a distinguishing characteristic of many of God's handiworks. "How beautifully simple!" has often been the philosopher's cry, on finding out some great secret of nature. Simplicity is the striking feature of the principle by which the man "born of God" overcomes the world. Perhaps he hardly understands it himself. But he is what he is, and does what he does, acts as he acts, behaves as he behaves, for one simple reason, he BELIEVES. He realizes the existence of 'unseen objects'—compared to which the frowns or smiles, the favor or blame of the world, are trifles as light as air. God, and heaven, and judgment, and eternity, are not "words and names" with him—but vast and substantial realities; and faith makes everything else look shadowy and unreal.

But, towering far above all other objects, he sees by faith an unseen Savior, who loved him, gave Himself for him, paid his debt to God with His own precious blood, went to the grave for him, rose again, and appears in heaven for him as his Advocate with the Father. SEEING HIM, he feels constrained to love Him first and foremost, to set his chief affection on things above, not on things on the earth, and to live not for himself, but for Him who died for him. SEEING HIM, he fears not to face the world's displeasure, and fights on with a firm confidence that he will be "more than conqueror." In short, it is "the expulsive power of a new principle"—a living faith in an unseen God and an unseen Jesus—which minimizes the difficulties of a true Christian, drives away the fear of man, and

overcomes the world.

This is the principle that made the Apostles what they were after the day of Pentecost. When Peter and John stood before the Council, and spoke in such fashion that all men marveled at their boldness, their vivid faith saw One higher than Annas and Caiaphas and their companions, who would never forsake them. When Saul, converted and renewed, gave up all his brilliant prospects among his own nation, to become a preacher of the gospel he had once despised, he saw far away, by faith, One that was invisible, who could give him a hundredfold more in this present life, and in the world to come everlasting life! These all overcame by FAITH.

This is the principle which made the primitive Christians hold fast their religion even to death, unshaken by the fiercest persecution of heathen emperors. They were often unlearned and ignorant men, and saw many things through a glass darkly. But their so-called "obstinacy" astonished even philosophers like Pliny.

For centuries there were never lacking men like Polycarp and Ignatius, who were ready to die, rather than to deny Christ. Fines, and prisons, and torture, and fire, and sword failed to crush the spirit of the noble army of martyrs. The whole power of imperial Rome, with her legions, proved unable to stamp out the religion which began with a few fishermen and publicans in Palestine. They overcame by FAITH.

This is the principle that made our own Reformers in the sixteenth century endure hardships even unto death, rather than withdraw their protest against the Church of Rome. Many of them, no doubt, like Rogers, and Philpot, and Bradford, might have enjoyed rich preferments and died quietly in their beds, if they would only have recanted. But they chose rather to suffer affliction, and strong in faith, died at the stake. This was the principle that made the rank and file of our English martyrs in the same age—laborers, artisans, and apprentices—yield their bodies to be burned. Poor and uneducated as they were, they were rich in faith; and if they could not speak for Christ, they could die for Him. These all overcame by BELIEVING.

But time would fail me if I brought forward all the evidence that might be adduced on this subject. Let us look at our own age. Let us consider the men who have made the greatest mark on the world for Christ's cause in the last hundred years. Let us remember how clergymen like Whitefield, and Wesley, and Romaine, and Venn stood alone in their day and generation, and revived English religion, in the face of opposition, slander, ridicule, and real persecution from nine-tenths of the professing Christians in our land. Let us remember how men like William Wilberforce, and Havelock, and Henry Lawrence, and Hedley Vicars, and George Moore, the Christian merchant, have witnessed for Christ in the most difficult positions, and displayed Christ's banner even in the House of Commons, in the camp, at the regimental mess table, or in the counting-house in the city. Let us remember how these noble servants of God were neither frightened nor laughed out of their religion, and won the respect even of their adversaries. These all had one principle. "Give me," said that strange dictator who rode rough-shod over England's Church and Crown in the seventeenth century, "Give me men that have a principle." These Christian soldiers of our own day had a principle, and that ruling principle was faith in an unseen God and Savior. By this faith they lived, and walked, and fought the good fight, and overcame.

Does any one who reads this paper desire to live the life of a true Christian, and overcome the world? Let him begin by seeking to have the principle of victory within. Without this, all outward show of spirituality is utterly worthless. There is many a worldly heart under a monk's cowl. Faith, inward faith, is the one thing needful. Let him begin by praying for FAITH. It is the gift of God, and a gift which those who ask shall never ask in vain. The fountain of faith is not yet dry. The mine is not exhausted. He who is called the "Author of faith" is the same yesterday, today, and forever; and waits to be entreated (Heb. 12:2). Without faith you will never war a good warfare, never set down your foot firmly, never make progress on the ice of this slippery world. You must **believe** if you would **do.** If men do nothing in religion, and sit still like uninterested spectators of a show, it is simply because they do not believe. Faith is the first step towards heaven.

Would any one who reads this paper fight the Christian battle with constantly increasing success and prosperity? Then let him pray daily for a continual growth of faith. Let him abide in Christ, get closer to Christ, tighten his hold on Christ every day that he lives. Let him never forget the prayer of the disciples, "Lord, increase our faith." Let him watch jealously over his faith, and never let its fire burn low. **According to the degree of his faith will be the measure of his peace, his strength, and his victory over the world.**

(a) And now let us leave the whole subject with the solemn self-inquiry—"What do we know of that great test of religion which this text supplies? What do we know of overcoming the world? Where are we? What are we doing? Whose are we, and whom do we serve? Are we overcoming or being overcome?" Alas, it is a sorrowful fact, that many know not whether they are Christ's freemen—or the world's slaves! The "fetters of the world" are often invisible. We are dragged downward insensibly, and are like one who sleeps in a boat, and knows not that he is drifting, gently drifting, towards the falls. There is no slavery so bad as that which is unfelt. There are no chains so really heavy as those which are unseen. Wise is that petition in our matchless Litany—"From all the deceits of the world, good Lord, deliver us."

I press this inquiry in all affection on my younger readers. You are just at that generous and unsuspecting age when the world seems least dangerous and most inviting, and it stands to reason you are most likely to be ensnared and overcome. Experience alone can make you see the enemy in his true colors. When you have as many grey hairs on your heads as I have, you will place a very different estimate on the praise or the hatred of this world. But, even now, remember my caution—"If you love your souls, hold the world at arm's length. Beware of the world."

(b) Reader, you and I meet over this paper for once in our lives, and are parting in all probability to meet no more. You are perhaps launching forth on the waves of this troublesome world. My heart's desire and prayer to God is, that you may have a prosperous voyage, and be found at length in the safe haven of eternal life.

But, oh, take heed that you are well equipped for the stormy waters you have to cross, and see that you have a compass to steer by, that you can depend on, and a pilot who will not fail! Beware of making shipwreck by conformity to the world. Alas, how many put to sea in gallant trim, with colors flying, and brilliant prospects, and are lost at last with all on board! They seem at first to begin with Moses, and Daniel, and the saints in Nero's household; but they end at last with Balaam, and Demas, and Lot's wife! Oh, remember the pilot and the compass! No compass like the Bible. No pilot like Christ!

Take the advice I give you, as a friend, this day. Ask the Lord Jesus Christ to come and dwell in your heart by faith, and to "deliver you from this present evil world" (Gal. 1:4). Ask Him to pour out His promised Spirit on you, and to make you willing to bear His easy yoke without further delay, and to resist the world. Strive, in the strength of Christ, to get the victory over the world, whatever it may cost you. Be ashamed of being a slave, however gilded the chains may be. Be ashamed of the mark of the collar. Resolve to play the man and be free. Liberty is the greatest of blessings, and deserves the greatest struggles. Well said the Jewish rabbis in ancient days, "If the sea were ink, and the earth parchment, it would never serve to describe the praises of liberty." For freedom's sake, Greeks, and Romans, and Germans, and Poles, and Swiss, and Scotchmen, and Englishmen, have often cheerfully fought to the bitter end, and laid down their lives. Surely, if men have made such sacrifices for the freedom of their bodies, it is a disgrace to professing Christians if they will not fight for the liberty of their souls. This day, I repeat, resolve in the strength of Christ, that you will fight the good fight against the world; and not only fight, but overcome. "If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed" (John 8:36).

(c) Finally, let us all remember that the Christian soldier's best time is yet to come. Here, in this world, we are often injured and hindered in our warfare. There are many hard things to be done and borne. Them are wounds and bruises; there are watchings and fatigues; there are reverses and disappointments. But the end of all things is at hand. For those who "overcome" there will be a conqueror's crown.

In the warfare of this world, the muster on the morning after a victory is often a sorrowful sight. I pity the man who could look at Miss Thompson's famous picture of The Roll-call without deep emotion. Even when peace is proclaimed, the return of victorious regiments is an occasion of very mingled feelings. That man must have had a cold heart who could see the Guards march back into London after the Crimean war without a sigh or a tear.

Thanks be to God, the review day of Christ's victorious army will be a very different thing. There will be none missing in that day. It will be a meeting without regret. It will be "a morning without clouds" and tears! It will make rich amends for all we have suffered in resisting and overcoming the world.

He who saw our gracious Queen distributing the Victoria Cross at the Horse Guards during the Russian war might well be stirred and moved at the sight. But he who saw her come down from her seat to meet a wounded officer who could not walk, and, with her own royal hands, pin his decoration on his bosom, will probably remember it as long as he lives.

But, after all, it was nothing compared to the transactions of that great day, when the Captain of our salvation and His victorious soldiers shall at length meet face to face. What tongue can tell the happiness of that time when we shall lay aside our armor, and "say to the sword, Rest, and be still!" What mind can conceive the blessedness of that hour when we shall see the King in His beauty, and hear these words, "Well done, good and faithful servant and soldier, enter you into the joy of your Lord"? For that glorious day let us wait patiently, for it cannot be far off. In the hope of it let us work, and watch, and pray, and fight on, and resist the world. And let us never forget our Captain's words—"In the world you shall have tribulation—but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

Election

by J. C. Ryle

"Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God." 1 Thes. 1:4

"Give diligence to make your calling and election sure." 2 Peter 1:10.

The texts which head this page contain a word of peculiar interest. It is a word which is often in men's minds, and an men's tongues, from one end of Great Britain to the other. That word is "Election."

There are few Englishmen who do not know something of a general election to Parliament. Many are the evils which come to the surface at such a time. Bad passions are called out. Old quarrels are dug up, and new ones are planted. Promises are made, like pie-crust, only to be broken. False profession, lying, drunkenness, intimidation, oppression, flattery, abound on every side. At no time perhaps does human nature make such a poor exhibition of itself as at a general election!

Yet it is only fair to look at all sides of an election to Parliament. There is nothing new, or peculiarly English, about its evils. In every age, and in every part of the world, the heart of man is pretty much the same. There have never been wanting people ready to persuade others that they are not so well governed as they ought to be, and that they themselves are the fittest rulers that can be found. A thousand years before Christ was born the following picture was drawn by the unerring hand of the Holy Spirit—
After this, Absalom got himself a chariot, horses, and 50 men to run before him. He would get up early and stand beside the road leading to the city gate. Whenever anyone had a grievance to bring before the king for settlement, Absalom called out to him and asked, "What city are you from?" If he replied, "Your servant is from one of the tribes of Israel," Absalom said to him, "Look, your claims are good and right, but the king does not have anyone to listen to you." He added, "If only someone would appoint me judge in the land. Then anyone who had a grievance or dispute could come to me, and I would make sure he received justice." When a person approached to bow down to him, Absalom reached out his hand, took hold of him, and kissed him. Absalom did this to all the Israelites who came to the king for a settlement. So Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel. (2 Samuel 15:1-6)

When we read this passage we must learn not to judge our own times too harshly. The evils that we see are neither peculiar nor new.

After all, we must never forget that popular election, with all its evils, is far better than a dictatorial form of government. To live under the dominion of an absolute tyrant, who allows no one to think, speak, or act for himself, is miserable slavery. For the sake of liberty

we must put up with all the evils which accompany the return of members to Parliament. We must each do our duty conscientiously, and learn to expect little from any party. If those we support succeed, we must not think that all they do will be right. If those we oppose succeed, we must not think that all they do will be wrong. **To expect little from any earthly ruler is one great secret of contentment. To pray for all who are in authority, and to judge all their actions charitably, is one of the principal duties of a Christian.**

But there is another Election, which is of far higher importance than any election to Parliament—an Election whose consequences will abide, when Queen, Lords, and Commons have passed away, an Election which concerns all classes, the lowest as well as the highest, the women as well as the men. It is the Election which the Scriptures call "the Election of God."

I ask the readers of this paper to give me their attention for a few minutes, while I try to set before them the subject of this Election. Believe me, it affects your eternal happiness most deeply. Whether you are in Parliament or not, whether you vote or not, whether you are on the winning side or not, all this will matter very little a hundred years hence. But it will matter greatly whether you are in the number of "God's Elect."

In handling the subject of Election, there are only two things which I propose to do.

Firstly, I will state the doctrine of Election, and show what it is.

Secondly, I will fence the subject with cautions, and guard it against abuse.

If I can make these two points clear and plain to the mind of all who read these pages, I think I shall have done their souls a great and essential service.

I. I have firstly to state **the doctrine of Election**. What is it? What does it mean? Accurate statements on this point are of great importance. No doctrine of Scripture perhaps has suffered so much damage from the erroneous conceptions of foes, and the incorrect descriptions of friends, as that which is now before us.

The true doctrine of Election I believe to be as follows. God has been pleased from all eternity to choose certain men and women out of mankind, whom by His counsel secret to us, He has decreed to save by Jesus Christ. None are finally saved except those who are thus chosen. Hence the Scripture gives to God's people in several places the names of "God's Elect," and the choice or appointment of them to eternal life is called "God's election."

Those men and women whom God has been pleased to choose from all eternity, He calls in time, by His Spirit working in due season. He convinces them of sin. He leads them to Christ. He works in them repentance and faith. He converts, renews, and sanctifies them. He keeps them by His grace from falling away entirely, and finally brings them safe to glory. In short God's eternal Election is the first link in that chain of a sinner's salvation of which heavenly glory is the end. None ever repent, believe, and are born again, except the Elect. The primary and original cause of salvation, is God's eternal election.

The doctrine here stated, no doubt, is peculiarly deep, mysterious, and hard to understand. We have no eyes to see it fully. We have no line to fathom it thoroughly. No part of the Christian religion has been so much disputed, rejected, and reviled as this. None has called forth so much of that enmity against God, which is the grand mark of the carnal mind. Thousands of so-called Christians profess to believe the Atonement, salvation by grace, and justification by faith, and yet refuse to look at the doctrine of Election. The very mention of the word to some people is enough to call forth expressions of anger, ill-temper, and passion.

But, after all, is the doctrine of Election plainly stated in Scripture? This is the whole question which an honest Christian has to do with. If it is not in the Book of God, let it be forever discarded, refused, and rejected by man, no matter who propounds it. If it is there, let us receive it with reverence, as a part of Divine revelation, and humbly believe, even where we are not able to understand completely or explain fully. What then is written in the Scriptures? "To the law and to the testimony—if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." (Isaiah. 8:20.) Is Election in the Bible, or is it not? Does the Bible speak of certain people as God's Elect, or not?

Hear what our Lord Jesus Christ says, "For the Elect's sake the days shall be shortened." (Matt. 24:22.)

"If it were possible they should deceive even the Elect." (Mark 13:22.)

"He shall send His angels, and they shall gather together His Elect." (Matt. 24:31.)

"Shall not God avenge His own Elect?" (Luke 18:7.)

Hear what Paul says. "For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified." (Romans 8:29-30)

"Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's Elect?" (Rom. 8:33.)

"God has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world." (Ephes. 1:4.)

"Who has saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works—but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." (2 Tim. 1:9.)

"God has from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." (2 Thess. 2:13.)

Hear what Peter says, "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 1:2.)

"Give diligence to make your calling and Election sure." (2 Peter 1:10.)

I place these eleven texts before my readers, and I ask them to consider them well. If words have any meaning at all, they appear to me to teach most plainly the doctrine of personal Election. In the face of such texts I dare not refuse to believe that it is a Scriptural doctrine. I dare not, as an honest man, shut my eyes against the plain, obvious sense of Bible language. If I once began to do so, I should have no ground to stand on in pressing the Gospel on an unconverted man. I could not expect him to believe one set of texts to be true, if I did not believe another set. The eleven texts above quoted seem to my mind to prove conclusively that personal Election is a doctrine of Scripture. As such I must receive it, and I must believe it, however difficult it may be. As such I ask my readers this day to look at it calmly, weigh it seriously, and receive it as God's truth.

After all, whatever people may please to say, there is no denying that God's Election of some men and women to salvation is a simple matter of fact. That all professing Christians are not finally saved—but only some—that those who are saved owe their salvation entirely to the free grace of God and the calling of His Spirit—that no man can at all explain why some are called unto salvation and others are not called—all these are things which no Christian who looks around him can pretend for a moment to deny. Yet what does all this come to but the doctrine of Election?

Right views of **human nature** are certain to lead us to the same conclusion. Once admit that we are all naturally dead in trespasses and sins, and have no power to turn to God—once admit that all spiritual life in the heart of man must begin with God—once admit that He who created the world by saying, "Let there be light," must shine into man's heart, and create light within him, once admit that God does not enlighten all professing Christians in this manner—but only some, and that He acts in this matter entirely as a Sovereign, giving no account of His matters—once admit all this, and then see where you are. Whether you know it or not, you admit the whole doctrine of Election!

Right views of **God's nature and character**, as revealed in the Bible, appear to me to bring us to the same position. Do we believe that God knows all things from all eternity—that He governs all things by His providence, and that not even a sparrow falls to the ground without Him? Do we believe that He works all His works by a plan, like an architect of perfect knowledge, and that nothing concerning His saints, as His choicest and most excellent work, is left to chance, accident, and luck? Well, if we believe all this, we believe the whole doctrine which this paper is meant to support. This is the doctrine of Election.

Now what can be said in reply to these things? What are the principal weapons of argument with which Election is assailed? Let us see.

Some tell us that there is no such thing in Scripture as an Election of people and individuals. Such an Election, they say, would be arbitrary, unjust, unfair, partial, and unkind. The only Election they admit is one of nations, churches, communities—such as Israel in ancient times, and Christian nations, as compared to heathen nations, in our own day. Now is there anything in this objection that will stand? I believe there is nothing at all. For one thing, the Election spoken of in Scripture is an Election attended by the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit. This certainly is not the Election of nations. For another thing Paul himself draws a clear and sharply-cut distinction between Israel itself and the Elect. "Israel has not obtained that which he seeks for; but the Elect has obtained it." (Rom. 11:7.) Last, but not least, the advocates of the theory of national Election gain nothing whatever by it. How can they account for God withholding the knowledge of Christianity from 350 million Chinese for 1800 years, and yet spreading it over the continent of Europe? They cannot, except on the ground of God's sovereign will and His free Election! So that, in fact, they are driven to take up the very same position which they blame us for defending, and denounce as arbitrary and uncharitable.

Some tell us that at any rate Election is not the doctrine of the Church of England. It may do very well for dissenters and presbyterians—but not for churchmen. "It is a mere piece of Calvinism," they say, "an extravagant notion which came from Geneva, and deserves no credit among those who love the Prayer-book." Such people would do well to look at the end of their Prayer-books, and to read the Thirty-nine Articles. Let them turn to the 17th Article, and mark the following words, "Predestination to Life is the everlasting purpose of God, whereby (before the foundations of the world were laid) He has constantly decreed by His counsel secret to us, to deliver from curse and damnation those whom He has chosen in Christ out of mankind, and to bring them by Christ to everlasting salvation, as vessels made to honor. Therefore, they who are endued with so excellent a benefit of God are called according to God's purpose by His Spirit working in due season—they through grace obey the calling—they are justified freely—they are made sons of God by adoption—they are made like the image of His only-begotten Son Jesus Christ—they walk piously in good works, and at length, by God's mercy, they attain to everlasting felicity."

I commend that Article to the special attention of all English Churchmen. It is one of the sheet-anchors of sound doctrine in the present day. It never can be reconciled with baptismal regeneration! A wiser statement of the true doctrine of personal Election was never penned by the hand of uninspired man. It is thoroughly well-balanced and judiciously proportioned. In the face of such an Article it is simply ridiculous to say that the Church of England does not hold the doctrine of this paper.

In controverted matters I desire to speak courteously and cautiously. I wish to make allowance for the many varieties of men's temperaments, which insensibly affect our religious opinions, and for the lasting effect of early prejudices. I freely concede that Wesley, Fletcher, and a whole army of excellent Methodists and Arminians, have always denied Election, and that many deny it to this day. I do not say that to hold Election is absolutely necessary to salvation, though to be one of God's Elect undoubtedly is necessary. But I cannot call any man my master in theological matters. My own eyes see the doctrine of personal Election most clearly stated both in Scripture and the 17th Article of the Church of England. I cannot give it up. I believe firmly that it is an important part of God's truth, and one which to godly people is "full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort."

II. The next thing that I wish to do is to **fence the doctrine of Election with cautions, and to guard it against abuse.**

This is a branch of the subject which I hold to be of vast importance. All revealed truth is liable to be wrested and perverted. It is one of Satan's chief devices to make the Gospel odious by tempting people to distort it. Perhaps no part of Christian theology has suffered so much damage in this way as the doctrine of personal Election. Let me proceed to explain what I mean.

"I am not one of God's Elect," says one man. "It is no use for me to do anything at all in religion. It is waste of time for me to keep the Sabbath, attend the public worship of God, read my Bible, say my prayers. If I am to be saved, I shall be saved. If I am to be lost, I shall be lost. In the mean time I sit still and wait." This is a sore disease of soul. But I fear it is a very common one!

"I am one of God's Elect," says another man. "I am sure to be saved and go to heaven at last, no matter how I may live and go on. Exhortations to holiness—are legal. Recommendations to watch, and crucify self—are bondage. Though I fall, God sees no sin in me and loves me all the same. Though I often give way to temptation, God will not let me be altogether lost. Where is the use of doubts and fears and anxieties? I am confident I am one of the Elect, and as such I shall be found in glory." This again, is a sore disease. But I fear it is not altogether uncommon.

Now what shall be said to people who talk in this way? They need to be told very plainly that they are wresting a truth of the Bible to their own destruction, and turning food into poison. They need to be reminded that *their* notion of Election is a miserably unscriptural one. Election according to the Bible is a very different thing from what they suppose it to be. It is most intimately connected with other truths of equal importance with itself, and from these truths it ought never to be separated. Truths which God has joined together no man should ever dare to put asunder.

(a) For one thing, the doctrine of Election was never meant to destroy man's responsibility for the state of his own soul. The Bible everywhere addresses people as free agents, as beings accountable to God, and not as mere logs, and bricks, and stones. It is false to say that it is useless to tell people to cease to do evil, to learn to do well, to repent, to believe, to turn to God, to pray. Everywhere in Scripture it is a leading principle that man can lose his own soul, that if he is lost at last it will be his own fault, and his blood will be on his own head. The same inspired Bible which reveals this doctrine of Election is the Bible which contains the words, "Why will you die, O house of Israel?" "You will not come unto Me that you might have life." "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." (Ezek. 18:31; John 5:40; 3:19.) The Bible never says that sinners miss heaven because they are not Elect—but because they "neglect the great salvation," and because they will not repent and believe. The last judgment will abundantly prove that it is not the lack of God's Election, so much as laziness, the love of sin, unbelief, and unwillingness to come to Christ, which ruins the souls that are lost.

(b) For another thing, the doctrine of Election was never meant to prevent the fullest, freest offer of salvation to every sinner. In preaching and trying to do good we are warranted and commanded to set an open door before every man, woman, and child, and to invite everyone to come in. We know not who are God's Elect, and whom He means to call and convert. Our duty is to invite all. To every unconverted soul without exception we ought to say, "God loves you, and Christ has died for you." To everyone we ought to say, "Awake—repent—believe—come to Christ—be converted—turn—call upon God—strive to enter in—come, for all things are ready." To tell us that none will hear and be saved except God's Elect, is quite needless. We know it very well. But to tell us that on that account it is useless to offer salvation to any at all, is simply absurd. Who are we that we should pretend to know who will be found God's Elect at last? No! indeed. Those who now seem first may prove last, and those who seem last may prove first in the judgment day. We will invite all, in the firm belief that the invitation will do good to some. We will prophesy to the dry bones, if God commands us. We will offer life to all, though many reject the offer. In so doing we believe that we walk in the steps of our Master and His Apostles.

(c) For another thing, Election can only be known by its fruits. The Elect of God can only be discerned from those who are not Elect by their faith and life. We cannot climb up into the secret of God's eternal counsels. We cannot read the book of life. The fruits of the Spirit, seen and manifested in a man's conversation, are the only grounds on which we can ascertain that he is one of God's Elect. Where the marks of God's Elect can be seen, there, and there only, have we any warrant for saying "this is one of the Elect." How do I know that yon distant ship on the horizon of the sea has any pilot or steersman on board? I cannot with the best telescope discern anything but her masts and sails. Yet I see her steadily moving in one direction. That is enough for me. I know by this that there is a guiding hand on board, though I cannot see it. Just so it is with God's Election. The eternal decree we cannot possibly see. But the result of that decree cannot be hid. It was when Paul remembered the faith and hope and love of the Thessalonians, that he cried, I "know your Election of God." (1 Thess. 1:4.) Forever let us hold fast this principle in considering the subject before us. **To talk of anyone being Elect when he is living in sin, is nothing better than blasphemous folly.** The Bible knows of no Election except through "sanctification;" no eternal choosing except that we should be "holy;" no predestination except to be "conformed to the image of God's Son." When these things are lacking, it is mere waste of time to talk of Election. (1 Pet. 1:2; Ephes. 1:4; Rom. 8:29.)

(d) Last—but not least, Election was never intended to prevent people making a diligent use of all means of grace. On the contrary, the neglect of means is a most suspicious symptom, and should make us very doubtful about the state of a man's soul. Those whom the Holy Spirit draws He always draws to the written Word of God and to prayer. When there is the real grace of God in a heart, there will always be love to the means of grace. What says the Scripture? The very Christians at Rome to whom Paul wrote about foreknowledge and predestination, are the same to whom he says, "Continue instant in prayer." (Rom. 12:12.) The very Ephesians who were "chosen before the foundation of the world," are the same to whom it is said, "Put on the whole armor of God—take the sword of the Spirit—pray always with all prayer." (Ephes. 6:18.) The very Thessalonians whose Election Paul said he "knew," are the Christians to whom he cries in the same Epistle, "Pray without ceasing." (1 Thess. 5:17.) The very Christians whom Peter calls "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father," are the same to whom he says, "Desire the sincere milk of the Word—watch unto prayer." (1 Pet. 2:2; 4:7.) The evidence of texts like these is simply unanswerable and overwhelming. I shall not waste time by making any comment on them. An Election to salvation which teaches people to dispense with the use of all means of grace, may please ignorant people, fanatics, and Antinomians. But I take leave to say that it is an Election of which I can find no mention in God's Word.

I know not that I can wind up this part of my subject better than by quoting the latter part of the Seventeenth Article of the Church of England. I commend it to the special attention of all my readers, and particularly the last paragraph. "As the godly consideration of Predestination, and our Election in Christ, is full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort to godly people, and such as feel in themselves the working of the Spirit of Christ, mortifying the works of the flesh, and their earthly members, and drawing up their mind to high and heavenly things, as well because it does greatly establish and confirm their faith of eternal Salvation to be enjoyed through Christ, as because it does fervently kindle their love towards God—so, for curious and carnal people, lacking the Spirit of Christ, to have continually before their eyes the sentence of God's Predestination, is a most dangerous downfall, whereby the Devil does thrust them either into desperation, or into wretchedness of most unclean living, no less perilous than desperation.

"Furthermore, we must receive God's promises in such wise, as they be generally set forth to us in holy Scripture and, in our doings,

that will of God is to be followed which we have expressly declared unto us in the Word of God."

These are wise words. This is sound speech that cannot be condemned. Forever let us cling to the principle contained in this statement. Well would it have been for the Church of Christ, if the doctrine of Election had always been handled in this fashion. Well would it be for all Christians who feel puzzled by the heights and depths of this mighty doctrine, if they would remember the words of Scripture, "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God—but those which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law." (Deut. 29:29.)

I will now conclude the whole subject with a few plain words of personal **APPLICATION**.

(1) First of all let me entreat every reader of this paper not to refuse this doctrine of Election, merely because it is high, mysterious, and hard to be understood. Is it reverent to do so? Is it treating God's Word with the respect due to revelation? Is it right to reject anything written for our learning, and to give it hard names, merely because some misguided people have misused it, and turned it to a bad purpose? These are serious questions. They deserve serious consideration. If people begin rejecting a truth of Scripture merely because they do not like it, they are on slippery ground. There is no saying how far they may fall.

What after all do people gain by refusing the doctrine of Election? Does the system of those who deny Election save one soul more than that of those who hold it? Certainly not. Do those who hold Election narrow the way to heaven, and make salvation more difficult than those who deny it? Certainly not. The opponents of Election maintain that none will be saved except those who repent and believe. Well—the advocates of Election say just the same! The opponents of Election proclaim loudly that none but holy people go to heaven. Well—the advocates of Election proclaim the same doctrine just as loudly! What then, I ask once more, is gained by denying the truth of Election? I answer, Nothing whatever. And yet, while nothing is gained, a great deal of comfort seems to be lost. It is cold comfort to be told that God never thought on me before I repented and believed. But to know and feel that God had purposes of mercy toward me before the foundation of the world, and that all the work of grace in my heart is the result of an everlasting covenant and an eternal Election, is a thought full of sweet and unspeakable consolation. A work that was planned before the foundation of the world, by an Architect of almighty power and perfect wisdom, is a work which will never be allowed to fail and be overthrown.

(2) In the next place, let me entreat every reader of this paper to approach this doctrine of Election from the right end, and not to confuse his mind by inverting the order of truth. Let him begin with the first elements of Christianity—with simple repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, and so work his way toward Election. Let him not waste his time by beginning with inquiries about his own Election. Let him rather attend first to the plain marks of an Elect man, and never rest until these marks are his own. Let him break off from all known sin, and flee to Christ for pardon, peace, mercy, and grace. Let him cry mightily to God in prayer, and give the Lord no rest until he feels within him the real witness of the Spirit. He who begins in this fashion will thank God one day for His electing grace, in eternity if not in time. It is an old and quaint saying—but a very true one, "A man must first go to the little Grammar-school of Repentance and Faith, before he enters the great University of Election and Predestination."

The plain truth is, that God's scheme of salvation is like a ladder let down from heaven to earth, to bring together the holy God, and the sinful creature, man. God is at the top of the ladder and man is at the bottom. The top of the ladder is far above, out of our sight, and we have no eyes to see it. There, at the top of that ladder, are God's eternal purposes—His everlasting covenant, His Election, His predestination of a people to be saved by Christ. From the top of that ladder comes down that full and rich provision of mercy for sinners, which is revealed to us in the Gospel. The bottom of that ladder is close to sinful man on earth, and consists of the simple steps of repentance and faith. By them he must begin to climb upwards. In the humble use of them he shall mount higher and higher every year, and get clearer glimpses of good things yet to come. What can be more plain than the duty of using the steps which are close to our hands? What can be more foolish than to say, I will not put my foot on the steps at the bottom, until I clearly understand the steps at the top? Away with such perverse and childish reasonings! Common sense alone might tell us the path of duty, if we would only make use of it. That duty is to use simple truths honestly, and then to believe that higher truths will one day be made plain to our eyes. How, and in what manner the love of the eternal God comes down to us, may have much about it which is hard for poor worms like us to understand. But how we poor sinners are to draw near to God is clear and plain as the sun at noonday. Jesus Christ stands before us, saying, "Come unto Me!" Let us not waste time in doubting, quibbling, and disputing. Let us come to Christ at once, just as we are. Let us lay hold and believe!

(3) In the last place, let me entreat every true Christian who reads this paper to remember the exhortation of Peter, "Give diligence, to make your calling and Election sure." (2 Pet. 1:10.)

Surer in the sight of God than your Election has been from all eternity, you cannot make it. With Him there is no uncertainty. Nothing that God does for His people is left to chance, or liable to change. But surer and more evident to yourself and to the Church, your Election can be made; and this is the point that I wish to press on your attention. Strive to obtain such well-grounded assurance of hope that, as John says, you may "know that you know Christ." (1 John 2:3.) Strive so to live and walk in this world that all may take knowledge of you as one of God's children, and feel no doubt that you are going to heaven.

Listen not for a moment to those who tell you that in this life we can never be sure of our own spiritual state, and must always be in doubt. The Roman Catholics say so. The ignorant world says so. The devil says so. But the Bible says nothing of the kind. There is such a thing as strong assurance of our acceptance in Christ, and a Christian should never rest until he has obtained it. That a man may be saved without this strong assurance I do not deny. But that without it he misses a great privilege, and much comfort, I am quite sure.

Strive, then, with all diligence, "to make your calling and Election sure." "Lay aside every weight and the sins that most easily beset you." (Heb. 12:2.) Be ready to cut off the right hand and pluck out the right eye, if need be. Settle it firmly in your mind, that it is the highest privilege on this side the grave to know that you are one of the children of God.

Those who contend for place and office in this world are sure to be disappointed. When they have done all and succeeded to the uttermost, their honors are thoroughly unsatisfying, and their rewards are short-lived. Seats in Parliament and places in Cabinets must all be vacated one day. At best they can only be held for a few years. But he who is one of God's Elect has a treasure which can

never be taken from him, and a place from which he can never be removed. Blessed is that man who sets his heart on this Election. There is no election like the Election of God!

PERSEVERANCE

by J. C. Ryle

"They shall never perish." John 10:28

There are two points in religion on which the teaching of the Bible is very plain and distinct. One of these points is the fearful danger of the ungodly; the other is the perfect safety of the righteous. One is the happiness of those who are converted; the other is the misery of those who are unconverted. One is the blessedness of being in the way to heaven; the other is the wretchedness of being in the way to hell.

I hold it to be of the utmost importance that these two points should be constantly impressed on the minds of professing Christians. I believe that the exceeding privileges of the children of God, and the deadly peril of the children of the world, should be continually set forth in the clearest colors before the Church of Christ. I believe that the difference between the man in Christ, and the man not in Christ, can never be stated too strongly and too fully. Reserve on this subject is a positive injury to the souls of people. Wherever such reserve is practiced, the careless will not be aroused, believers will not be established, and the cause of God will receive much damage.

Many people, I fear, are not aware what a vast store of comfortable truths the Bible contains for the peculiar benefit of real Christians. There is a spiritual treasure-house in the Word which many never enter, and some eyes have not so much as seen. There you will find many a golden verity besides the old first principles of repentance, faith, and conversion. There you will see in glorious array the everlasting election of the saints in Christ—the special love wherewith God loved them before the foundation of the world—their mystical union with their risen Head in heaven, and His consequent sympathy with them—their interest in the perpetual intercession of Jesus, their High Priest—their liberty of daily communion with the Father and the Son, their full assurance of hope—their perseverance to the end. These are some of the precious things laid up in Scripture for those who love God. These are truths which some neglect from ignorance. Like the Spaniards in the days when they possessed California, they know not the rich mines beneath their feet, the mines from which the Americans have extracted such untold wealth. These are truths which some neglect from false humility. They look at them afar off with fear and trembling—but dare not touch them. But these are truths which God has given for our learning, and which we are bound to study. It is impossible to neglect them without inflicting injury upon ourselves.

It is to one special truth in the list of a believer's privileges that I now desire to direct attention. That truth is the doctrine of perseverance—the doctrine that true Christians shall never perish or be cast away. It is a truth which the natural heart has bitterly opposed in every age. It is a truth which for many reasons deserves particular attention at the present time. Above all, it is a truth with which the happiness of all God's children is most closely connected.

There are four things which I propose to do in considering the subject of perseverance.

I. I will explain what the doctrine of perseverance means.

II. I will show the Scriptural foundations on which the doctrine is built.

III. I will point out some reasons why many reject the doctrine.

IV. I will mention some reasons why the doctrine is of great practical importance.

I approach the subject with diffidence, because I know it is one on which holy people do not see alike. But God is my witness, that in writing this paper, I have no desire to promote any cause but that of Scriptural truth. In pleading for perseverance, I can say with a good conscience, that I firmly believe I am pleading for an important part of the Gospel of Christ. May God the Spirit guide both writer and reader into all truth! May that blessed day soon come when all shall know the Lord perfectly, and differences and divisions pass away forever!

I. I will first explain what I mean by the doctrine of perseverance.

It is of the utmost importance to make this point clear. It is the very foundation of the subject. It lies at the threshold of the whole argument. In all discussions of disputed points in theology, it is impossible to be too accurate in defining terms. Half the abuse which has unhappily been poured on perseverance, has arisen from a thorough misunderstanding of the doctrine in question. Its adversaries have fought with phantoms of their own creation, and spent their strength in beating the air.

When I speak of the doctrine of perseverance, I mean this. I say that the Bible teaches that true believers, real genuine Christians, shall persevere in their religion to the end of their lives. They shall never perish. They shall never be lost. They shall never be cast away. Once in Christ, they shall always be in Christ. Once made children of God by adoption and grace, they shall never cease to be His children, and become children of the devil. Once endued with the grace of the Spirit, that grace shall never be taken from them. Once pardoned and forgiven, they shall never be deprived of their pardon. Once joined to Christ by living faith, their union shall never be broken off. Once called by God into the narrow way that leads to life, they shall never be allowed to fall into hell. In a word, every man, woman, and child on earth who receives saving grace, shall sooner or later receive eternal glory. Every soul who is once justified and washed in Christ's blood, shall at length be found safe at Christ's right hand in the day of judgment.

Such statements as this sound tremendously strong. I know that well. But I am not going to leave the subject here—I must dwell upon it a little longer. I desire to clear the doctrine I am defending from the cloud of misrepresentation by which many darken it. I want people to see it in its own proper dress—not as it is portrayed by the hand of ignorance and prejudice—but as it is set forth in the

Scripture of truth.

(a) Perseverance is a doctrine with which the ungodly and worldly have nothing to do. It does not belong to that vast multitude who have neither knowledge, nor thought, nor faith, nor fear, nor anything else of Christianity except the name. It is not true of them, that they will "never perish." On the contrary, except they repent, they will come to a miserable end.

(b) Perseverance is a doctrine with which hypocrites and false professors have nothing to do. It does not belong to those unhappy people whose religion consists in talk, and words, and a form of godliness, while their hearts are destitute of the grace of the Spirit. It is not true of them, that they will "never perish." On the contrary, except they repent, they will be lost forever.

"We do not hold that all whom the most discerning minister or Christian considers true Christians, will be 'kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.' God alone can search the heart, and He may see that to be a dead and temporary faith, which we in the judgment of charity think living and permanent."—Scott

(c) Perseverance is the peculiar privilege of real, true spiritual Christians. It belongs to the sheep of Christ who hear His voice and follow Him. It belongs to those who are "washed, and justified, and sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of God." (1 Cor. 6:11.) It belongs to those who repent, and believe in Christ, and live holy lives. It belongs to those who have been born again, and converted, and made new creatures by the Holy Spirit. It belongs to those who are of a broken and contrite heart, and mind the things of the Spirit, and bring forth the fruits of the Spirit. It belongs to "the elect of God, who cry to Him night and day." (Luke 18:7.) It belongs to those who know the Lord Jesus by experience, and have faith, and hope, and charity. It belongs to those who are the fruit-bearing branches of the vine—the wise virgins—the lights of the world—the salt of the earth—the heirs of the kingdom—the followers of the Lamb. These are they whom the Bible calls "the saints." And it is the saints and the saints alone of whom it is written, that they shall "never perish."

"It is grossly contrary to the truth of the Scriptures to imagine that they who are thus renewed, can be unborn again."—Leighton

Does anyone suppose that what I am saying applies to none but eminent saints? Does anyone think that people like the apostles, and prophets, and martyrs, may perhaps persevere to the end—but that it cannot be said of the common sort of believers? Let him know that he is entirely mistaken. Let him know that this privilege of perseverance belongs to the whole family of God—to the youngest as well as the oldest—to the weakest as well as the strongest—to the babes in grace as well as to the oldest pillars of the Church. The least faith shall as certainly continue indestructible as the greatest. The least spark of grace shall prove as unquenchable as the most burning and shining light. Your faith may be very feeble, your grace may be very weak, your strength may be very small, you may feel that in spiritual things you are but a child. You may doubt the reality of your own conversion. Yet fear not, neither be afraid. It is not on the quantity of a man's grace—but on the truth and genuineness of it that the promise turns. A bronze farthing is as truly a current coin of the realm as a golden sovereign, though it is not so valuable. Wherever sin is truly repented of, and Christ is truly trusted, and holiness is truly followed—there is a work which shall never be overthrown. It shall stand when the earth and all the works thereof shall be burned up.

There are yet some things to be said about perseverance, to which I must request special attention. Without them the account of the doctrine would be imperfect and incomplete. The mention of them may clear up some of the difficulties which surround the subject, and throw light on some points of Christian experience, which God's children find hard to understand.

(a) Remember, then, that when I say believers shall persevere to the end, I do not for a moment say that they shall never fall into sin. They may fall sadly, foully, and shamefully, to the scandal of true religion, to the injury of their families, to their own deep and bitter sorrow. Noah once fell into drunkenness. Abraham twice said falsely that Sarah was only his sister. Lot took up his abode in Sodom. Jacob deceived his father Isaac. Moses spoke unadvisedly with his lips. David committed horrible adultery. Solomon lost his first love, and was led away by his many wives. Jehoshaphat made affinity with Ahab. Hezekiah forgot God, and boasted of his riches. Peter denied his Lord three times with an oath. The apostles all forsook Christ in the garden. Paul and Barnabas had such a "sharp contention" that they were obliged to part company. All these are cases in point. They are all melancholy proofs that Christians may fall.

But believers shall never fall totally, finally, and completely. They shall always rise again from their falls by repentance, and renew their walk with God. Though sorely humbled and cast down, they never entirely lose their grace. The comfort of it they may lose—but not the existence of grace. Like the moon under an eclipse, their light is for a season turned into darkness; but they are not rejected and cast away. Like the trees in winter, they may show neither leaves nor fruit for a time; but the life is still in their roots. They may be overtaken by a fault, and carried away by temptation. But they never perish.

(b) Remember, for another thing, that when I say believers shall persevere to the end, I do not mean that they shall have no doubts and fears about their own safety. So far from this being the case, the holiest people of God are sometimes sorely troubled by anxieties about their own spiritual condition. They see so much weakness in their own hearts, and find their practice come so short of their desires, that they are strongly tempted to doubt the truth of their own grace, and to fancy they are but hypocrites, and shall never reach heaven at all. To be safe is one thing—to feel sure that we are safe is quite another. There are many true believers who never enjoy the full assurance of hope all their days. Their faith is so weak, and their sense of sin so strong, that they never feel confident of their own interest in Christ. Many a time they could say with David, "I shall one day perish" (1 Sam. 27:1); and with Job, "Where is my hope?" (Job 17:15.) The "joy and peace in believing," which some feel, and the"witness of the Spirit," which some experience—are things which some believers, whose faith it is impossible to deny, never appear to attain. Called as they evidently are by the grace of God, they never seem to taste the full comfort of their calling. But still they are perfectly safe, though they themselves refuse to know it.

"More happy—but not more secure,
The glorified spirits in heaven."

The full assurance of hope is not necessary to salvation. The absence of it is no argument against a man's perseverance to the end. That mighty master of theology, John Bunyan, knew well what he wrote, when he told us that Despondency and Much-afraid got safe to the celestial city at last, as well as Christiana and Valiant-for-the-truth It is as true of the most doubting child of God, as it is of

the strongest, that he shall "never perish." He may never feel it. But it is true.

"Every believer does not know that he is a believer, and therefore, he cannot know all the privileges that belong to believers."—Traill, 1690.

(c) Remember, in the last place, that the certain perseverance of believers does not free them from the necessity of watching, praying, and using means, or make it needless to ply them with practical exhortations. So far from this being the case, it is just by the use of means that God enables them to continue in the faith. He draws them with the "cords of a man." He uses warnings and conditional promises as part of the machinery by which He insures their final safety. The very fact that they despised the helps and ordinances which God has appointed, would be a plain proof that they had no grace at all and were on the road to destruction. Paul had a special revelation from God before his shipwreck, that he and all the ship's company should get safe to land. But it is a striking fact that he said to the soldiers, "Except the shipmen abide in the ship you cannot be saved." (Acts 27:31.) He knew that the end was insured—but he believed also that it was an end to be reached by the use of certain means. The cautions, and conditional promises, and admonitions to believers, with which Scripture abounds, are all a part of the Divine agency by which their perseverance is effected. An old writer says, "they do not imply that the saints can fall away—but they are preservatives to keep them from falling away." The man who thinks he can do without such cautions, and despises them as legal, may well be suspected as an impostor, whose heart has never yet been renewed. The man who has been really taught by the Spirit will generally have a humble sense of his own weakness, and be thankful for anything which can quicken his conscience, and keep him on his guard. Those who persevere to the end are not dependent on any means—but still they are not independent of them. Their final salvation does not hang on their obedience to practical exhortations—but it is just in taking heed to such exhortations that they will always continue to the end. It is the diligent, the watchful, the prayerful, and the humble, to whom belongs the promise, "They shall never perish."

I have now given an account of what I mean when I speak of the doctrine of perseverance. This, and this only, is the doctrine that I am prepared to defend in this paper. I ask people to weigh well what I have said, and to examine the statement I have made on every side. I believe it will stand inspection.

(a) It will not do to tell us that this doctrine of perseverance has any tendency to encourage careless and ungodly living. Such a charge is utterly destitute of truth. It cannot justly be brought forward. I have not a word to say in behalf of anyone who lives in willful sin, however high his profession may be. He is deceiving himself. He has a lie in his hand. He has none of the marks of God's elect. The perseverance I plead for is not that of sinners—but of saints. It is not a perseverance in carnal and ungodly ways—but a perseverance in the way of faith and grace. Show me a man who deliberately lives an unholy life, and yet boasts that he is converted and shall never perish, and I say plainly that I see nothing hopeful about him. He may know all mysteries, and speak with the tongues of angels—but, so long as his life is unaltered, he appears to me in the high road to hell.

"Let none encourage themselves to a freedom in sin, and presume upon God's preservation of them without the use of means. No! The electing counsel upon which this victory is founded, chose us to the means as well as to the end. He who makes such a consequence, I doubt whether he ever was a Christian. I may safely say that any person that has settled, resolved, and willful remissness, never yet was in the covenant of Grace."—Charnock on Weak Grace. 1684.

(b) It will not do to tell us that this doctrine of perseverance, is merely a piece of Calvinism. Nothing is easier than to get up a prejudice against a truth, by calling it a bad name. People deal with doctrines they do not like, much as Nero did when he persecuted the early Christians. They dress them up in a hideous garment, and then hold them up to scorn and run them down. The perseverance of the saints is often treated in this manner. People stave it off by some sneering remark about Calvinism. Surely it would be more fitting to inquire whether perseverance was not taught in the Bible from the beginning, and long before Calvin was born. The question to be decided is not whether the doctrine is Calvinistic—but whether it is scriptural. The words of the famous Horsley deserve to be widely known. "Take especial care," he says, "before you aim your shafts at Calvinism, that you know what is Calvinism and what is not—that in the mass of doctrine which it is of late become the fashion to abuse under the name of Calvinism, you can distinguish with certainty between that part of it which is nothing better than Calvinism, and that which belongs to our common Christianity and the general faith of the reformed Churches—lest, when you mean only to fall foul of Calvinism you should unwarily attack something more sacred and of a higher origin."

(c) Last—but not least, it will not do to tell us that perseverance is not the doctrine of the Church of England. Whatever people may please to say against it, this is an assertion, at any rate, which they will find it hard to prove. Perseverance is taught in the seventeenth Article of the Church of England, clearly, plainly, unmistakably. It was the doctrine of the first five Archbishops of Canterbury, Parker, Grindal, Whitgift, Bancroft, and Abbott. It was the doctrine preached by the judicious Hooker, as anyone may see by reading his sermons.*

It was the doctrine which all the leading divines of the Church of England maintained until the reign of Charles the First. The denial of the doctrine up to this time was hardly tolerated. More than one minister who called it in question was compelled to read a public recantation before the University of Cambridge. In short, until the time when Archbishop Laud came into power, perseverance was regarded in the Church of England as an acknowledged truth of the Gospel. Together with the Popish leaven which Laud brought with him, there came the unhappy doctrine that true believers may fall away and perish. This is simple matter of history. The perseverance of the saints is the old doctrine of the Church of England. The denial of it is the new.

It is time to leave this branch of the subject and pass on. I need no clearer and more distinct statement of perseverance than that contained in the Seventeenth Article of my own Church, to which I have already referred. The Article says of God's elect, "those who are endued with so excellent a benefit of God, be called according to God's purpose by His Spirit working in due season—they through grace obey His calling—they are justified freely—they are made sons of God by adoption—they are made like the image of His only begotten Son Jesus Christ—they walk religiously in good works, and at length, by God's mercy, they attain to everlasting felicity." These are precisely the views which I maintain. This is the doctrine which I long ago subscribed. This is the truth which I believe it is my duty, as a clergyman, to defend. This is the truth which I now want my readers to receive and believe.

"I would entreat any man that has his eyes set right in his head, to read and consider the words of the Seventeenth Article, the order and soundness of them; and then let him judge whether perseverance unto the end be not soundly and roundly set down and averred

in this Article."—George Carleton

II. I now proceed to show the Scriptural foundations on which the doctrine of perseverance is built. I need hardly say that the Bible is the only test by which the truth of every religious doctrine can be tried. The words of the Sixth Article of the Church of England deserve to be written in letters of gold, "Whatever is not read in the Holy Scripture, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man that it should be believed as an article of the faith." By that rule I am content to abide. I ask no one to believe the final perseverance of the saints, unless the doctrine can be proved to be that of the Word of God. **One plain verse of Scripture outweighs the most logical conclusions to which human reason can attain.**

In bringing forward those texts of Scripture on which this paper is founded, I purposely abstain from quoting from the Old Testament. I do so, lest any should say that the Old Testament promises belong exclusively to the Jewish people as a nation, and are not available in a disputed question affecting individual believers. I do not admit the soundness of this argument—but I will not give anyone the chance of using it. I find proofs in abundance in the New Testament, and to them I shall confine myself.

I shall write down the texts which appear to me to prove final perseverance, without note or comment. I will only ask my readers to observe how deep and broad is the foundation on which the doctrine rests. Observe that it is not for any strength or goodness of their own, that the saints shall continue to the end, and never fall away. They are in themselves weak, and frail, and liable to fall like others. Their safety is based on the promise of God, which was never yet broken—on the election of God, which cannot be in vain—on the power of the great Mediator Christ Jesus, which is Almighty—on the inward work of the Holy Spirit, which cannot be overthrown. I ask you to read the following texts carefully, and see whether it is not so.

"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one." (John 10:27-30)

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:35-39)

"They went out from us—but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us—but they went out that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us." (1 John 2:19.)

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He who hears my word, and believes on Him who sent Me, has everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." (John 5:24.)

"I am the living bread who came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever." (John 6:51.)

"Because I live, you shall live also." (John 14:19.)

"Whoever lives and believes in Me, shall never die" (John 11:26.)

"By one offering He has perfected forever those who are sanctified." (Heb. 10:14.)

"He who does the will of God abides forever." (1 John 2:17.)

"Sin shall not have dominion over you." (Rom. 6:14.)

"Who shall also confirm you to the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Cor. 1:8.)

"Kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time." (1 Peter 1:5.)

"Preserved in Jesus Christ, and called." (Jude 1.)

"The Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto His heavenly kingdom." (2 Tim. 4:18.)

"I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He who calls you, who also will do it." (1 Thess. 5:23, 24.)

"The Lord is faithful, who shall establish you, and keep you from evil." (2 Thess. 3:3.)

"God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted above that you are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it" (1 Cor. 10:13.)

"God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath; That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." (Heb. 6:17, 18.)

"This is the Father's will which has sent Me, that of all which He has given Me I should lose nothing—but should raise it up again at the last day." (John 6:39.)

"The foundation of God stands sure, having this seal, the Lord knows those who are His." (2 Tim. 2:19.)

"Whom He did predestinate, them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, them he also glorified." (Rom. 8:30.)

"God has not appointed us unto wrath—but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 These. 5:9.)

"God has from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth." (2 Thess. 2:13.)

"The vessels of mercy, which He had afore prepared unto glory." (Rom. 9:23.)

"The gifts and calling of God are without repentance." (Rom. 11:29.)

"If it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect." (Matt 24:24.)

"He is able to save to the uttermost all those who come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them." (Heb. 7:25.)

"Able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy." (Jude 24.)

"I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." (2 Tim. 1:12.)

"I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not." (Luke 22:32.)

"Holy Father, keep through Your own name those whom You have given Me." (John 17:11.)

"I pray not that You should take them out of the world—but that You should keep them from the evil." (John 17:15.)

"I will that they also whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am." (John 17:24.)

"If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son; much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." (Rom. 5:10.)

"The Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it sees Him not, neither knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you, and shall be in you." (John 14:17.)

"Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." (Phil. 1:6.)

"The anointing which you have received of Him abides in you; and you need not that any man teach you—but as the same anointing teaches you of all things, and is truth, and no lie, and even as it has taught you, you shall abide in Him." (1 John 2:27.)

"Born again, not of corruptible seed—but of incorruptible." (1 Peter 1:23.)

"He has said, I will never leave you nor forsake you." (Heb. 13:5.)

I lay these thirty-nine texts of Scripture before my readers, and ask serious attention to them. I repeat that I will make no comment on them. I had rather leave them to the honest common sense of all who read the Bible. Some of these texts, no doubt, bring out the doctrine of final perseverance more clearly than others. About the interpretation of some of them, men's judgments may differ widely. But there are not a few of the thirty-nine which appear to my mind so plain, that were I to invent words to confirm my views, I would despair of inventing any that would convey my meaning so unmistakably.

I am far from saying that these texts are all the Scriptural evidence that might be brought forward. I am satisfied that the doctrine maintained in this paper might be confirmed by other arguments of great weight and power.

(a) I might point to the attributes of God's character revealed in the Bible, and show how His wisdom, unchangeableness, and power, and love, and glory are all involved in the perseverance of the saints. If the elect may finally perish, what becomes of God's counsel about them in eternity, and His doings for them in time? "Now if You shall kill all this people as one man, then the nations, which have heard the fame of You, will speak, saying, Because the Lord was not able to bring this people into the land which He aware unto them, therefore He has slain them in the wilderness." Numbers 14:15, 16. "What will You do to Your great name "—Joshua 7:9. "If any of the elect perish, God is overcome by man's perverseness; but none of them perish, because God, who is omnipotent, can by no means be overcome."—Augustine.

(b) I might point to all the offices which the Lord Jesus fills, and show what discredit is thrown on His discharge of them, if any of His believing people can finally be lost. What kind of **Head** would He be, if any of the members of His mystical body could be torn from Him? What kind of **Shepherd** would He be, if a single sheep of His flock was left behind in the wilderness? What kind of **Physician** would He be, if any patient under His hand were at length found incurable? What kind of High **Priest** would He be, if any name once written on His heart were found missing when He makes up His jewels? What kind of **Husband** would He be, if He and any soul once united to Him by faith were ever put asunder?

"How well do they consult for Christ's honor, who say His sheep may die in a ditch of final apostasy!" "Christ and His members make one Christ. Now is it possible a piece of Christ can be found at last burning in hell? Can Christ be a crippled Christ? Can this member drop off and that? How can Christ part with His mystical members and not with His glory?"—Gurnall. 1655.

(c) Finally, I might point to the great fact that there is not a single example in all Scripture of anyone of God's elect ever finally making shipwreck and going to hell. We read of false prophets and hypocrites. We read of fruitless branches, stony-ground and thorny-ground hearers, virgins without oil in their lamps, servants who bury their talents. We read of Balaam, and Lot's wife, and Saul, and Judas Iscariot, and Ananias and Sapphira, and Demas. We see their hollow characters. We are told of their end. They had no root. They were rotten at the heart. They endured for a while. They went at last to their own place. But there is not a single instance in the whole Bible of anyone falling away who ever showed unquestionable evidences of grace. People like Abraham, and Moses, and David, and Peter, and Paul always hold on their way. They may slip. They may fall for a season. But they never entirely depart from God. They never perish. Surely if the saints of God can be cast away, it is a curious and striking fact that the Bible should not have given us one single plain example of it.

But time and space would fail me if I were to enter into the field which I have just pointed out. I think it better to rest my case on the texts which I have already given. The mind to which these texts carry no conviction, is not likely to be influenced by other arguments. To myself they appear, when taken altogether, to contain such an immense mass of evidence, that I dare not, as a Christian man, deny perseverance to be true. I dare not, because I feel at this rate I might dispute the truth of any doctrine in the Gospel. I feel that if I could explain away such plain texts as some of those I have quoted, I could explain away almost all the leading truths of Christianity.

I am quite aware that there are some texts and passages of Scripture which appear at first sight to teach a contrary doctrine to that which I maintain in this paper. I know that many attach great weight to these texts, and consider them to prove that the saints of God may perish and fall away. I can only say that I have examined these texts with attention—but have found in them no reason to alter my opinion on the subject of perseverance. Their number is small. Their meaning is unquestionably more open to dispute than that of many of the thirty-nine I have quoted. All of them admit of being interpreted so as not to contradict the doctrine of perseverance. I hold it to be an infallible rule in the exposition of Scripture, that **when two texts seem to contradict one another, the less plain must give way to the more plain, and the weak must give way to the strong**. That doctrine which reconciles most texts of Scripture is most likely to be right. That doctrine which makes most texts quarrel with one another is most likely to be wrong.

The following texts, on which the **opponents of perseverance** principally rely, appear to call for a brief notice.

Ezek. 3:20 and Ezek 18:24. I can see no proof in either of these cases that "the righteous" here spoken of, is anything more than one whose outward conduct is righteous. There is nothing to show that he is one justified by faith and accounted righteous before God.

1 Cor. 9:27. I see nothing in this but the godly fear of falling into sin, which is one of the marks of a believer, and distinguishes him from the unconverted, and a simple declaration of the means which Paul used to preserve himself from being a cast-away. It is like 1 John 5:18, "He who is begotten of God keeps himself."

John 15:2. This does not prove that true believers shall be taken away from Christ. A branch that "does not bear fruit" is not a believer. "A lively faith," says the 12th Article, "may be as evidently known by good works, as a tree is known by the fruit."

1 Thess. 5:19. If "the Spirit" here means the Spirit in ourselves, it means no more than "grieving the Spirit," in Ep. 4:30. But most good commentators think it is the Spirit's gifts in others, and ought to be taken in connection with verse 20.

Gal. 5:4. The tenor of the whole Epistle seems to show that this "falling" is not from the inward grace of the Spirit—but from the doctrine of grace. The same remarks applies to 2 Cor. 6:1.

Heb. 6:4-6. The person here described as "falling away" has no characteristics which may not be discovered in unconverted people, while it is not said that he possesses saving faith, and charity, and is elect.

John 8:31; Col. 1:23. The conditional "if "in both these verses, and several others like them that might be quoted, does not imply an uncertainty as to the salvation of those described. It simply means that the evidence of real grace is "continuance." False grace perishes. True grace lasts. "It is frequent in Scripture," says Charnock, "to put into promises these conditions which in other places are promised to be wrought in us."—Charnock on Real Grace.

I readily grant that these are not all the texts that the adversaries of final perseverance generally bring forward; but I believe they are the principal ones. The weak point in their case is this—they have no text to prove that saints may fall away, which will at all compare with such an expression as, "My sheep shall never perish;" and they have no account to give of such a mighty saying as this promise of our Lord, which is at all satisfactory or even rational. John Goodwin, the famous Arminian, offers the following explanation of this text, "The promise of eternal safety made by Christ to His sheep, does not relate to their estate in the present world—but to that of the world to come!" A man must be sorely put to straits when he can argue in such a way.

I ask my readers, if not convinced by all I have said hitherto, to put down the texts I have quoted on behalf of perseverance, and the texts commonly quoted against it, in two separate lists. Weigh them one against another. Judge them with fair and honest judgment. Which list contains the greatest number of positive, unmistakable assertions? Which list contains the greatest number of sentences which cannot be explained away? Which list is the strongest? Which list is the weakest? Which list is the most flexible? Which list is the most unbending? If it were possible in a world like this to have this question fairly tried by an unprejudiced, intelligent jury, I have not the least doubt which way the verdict would go. It is my own firm belief and conviction that the final perseverance of the saints is so deeply founded on Scriptural foundations, that so long as the Bible is the judge, it cannot be overthrown.

III. The third thing I propose to do, is to point out the reasons why many reject the doctrine of perseverance. It is impossible to deny that multitudes of professing Christians entirely disagree with the views expressed in this paper. I am quite aware that many regard them with abhorrence, as dangerous, enthusiastic, and fanatical, and lose no opportunity of warning people against them. I am also aware that among those who hold that the saints of God may fall away and perish, are to be found many holy, self-denying, spiritually-minded people—people at whose feet I would gladly sit in heaven, though I cannot approve of all their teaching upon earth.

This being the case, it becomes a matter of deep interest to find out, if we can, the reasons why the doctrine of perseverance is so often refused. How is it that a doctrine for which so much Scripture can be alleged, should be stoutly opposed? How is it that a doctrine which for the first hundred years of the Reformed Church of England it was hardly allowable to call in question, should now be so frequently rejected? What new views can have risen up in the last two centuries which make it necessary to discharge this good old servant of Christ? I am confident that such inquiries are of deep importance in the present day. There is far more in this question than appears at first sight. I am satisfied that I am not wasting time in endeavoring to throw a little light on the whole subject.

I desire to clear the way by conceding that many good people refuse the doctrine of perseverance for no reason whatever, except that it is too strong for them. There are vast numbers of true-hearted Christians just now who never seem able to bear anything strong.

Their religious constitution appears so feeble, and their spiritual digestion so weak, that they must always be "fed with milk and not with meat." Talk to them strongly about grace, and they put you down as an Antinomian! Talk strongly about holiness, and you are thought legal! Speak strongly of election, and you are considered a narrow-minded Calvinist! Speak strongly about responsibility and free agency, and you are regarded as a low Arminian! In short, they can bear nothing strong of any kind or in any direction! Of course they cannot receive the doctrine of perseverance.

I leave these people alone. I am sorry for them. There are sadly too many of them in the Churches of Christ just now. I can only wish them better spiritual health, and less narrowness of views, and a quicker growth in spiritual knowledge. The people I have in my mind's eye in this part of my paper are of a different class, and to them I now address myself.

(1) I believe one reason why many do not hold perseverance, is their **general ignorance of the whole system of Christianity**. They have no clear idea of the nature, place, and proportion of the various doctrines which compose the Gospel. Its several truths have no definite position in their minds. Its general outline is not mapped out in their understandings. They have a vague notion that it is a right thing to belong to the Church of Christ, and to believe all the articles of the Christian faith. They have a floating misty idea that Christ has done certain things for them, and that they ought to do certain things for Him, and that if they do them it will be all right at last—but beyond this they really know nothing! Of the great systematic statements in the Epistles to the Romans, Galatians, and Hebrews, they are profoundly ignorant. As to a clear account of Justification, you might as well ask them to square the circle, or to write a letter in Sanscrit. It is a subject they have not even touched with the tips of their fingers. This is a sore disease, and only too common in England. Unhappily it is the disease of thousands who pass muster as excellent Churchmen. It is absurd to expect such people to hold perseverance. When a man does not know what it is to be justified, he cannot of course understand what it is to persevere to the end.

(2) I believe another reason why many do not hold perseverance, is their **dislike to any system of religion which draws distinctions between man and man**. There are not a few who entirely disapprove of any Christian teaching which divides congregations into different classes, and speaks of one class of people as being in a better and more favorable state before God than another. Such people cry out, that "all teaching of this kind is uncharitable;" that "we ought to hope well of everybody, and suppose everybody will go to heaven." They think it downright wrong to say that one man has faith and another has not, one is converted and another not, one a child of God and another a child of the devil, one a saint and another a sinner. "What right have we to think anything about it?" they say. "We cannot possibly know. Those whom we call good, are very likely no better than others—hypocrites, impostors and the like. Those of whom we think badly are very probably quite as much in the way to heaven as the rest of mankind, and have good hearts at the bottom."

As to anyone feeling sure of heaven, or confident of his own salvation, they consider it quite abominable. "No man can be sure. We ought to hope well of all." There are only too many people of this sort in the present day. Of course the doctrine of perseverance is perfectly intolerable to them. When a man refuses to allow that anyone is elect, or has grace, or enjoys any special mark of God's favor more than his neighbors, it stands to reason that he will deny that anyone can have the grace of perseverance.

(3) I believe another common reason why many do not hold perseverance, is **an incorrect view of the nature of saving faith**. They regard faith as nothing better than a feeling or impression. As soon as they see a man somewhat impressed with the preaching of the Gospel, and manifesting some pleasure in hearing about Christ, they set him down at once as a believer. By and by the man's impressions wear away, and his interest about Christ and salvation ceases altogether. Where is the faith he seemed to have? It is gone. How can his friends, who had pronounced him a believer, account for it? They can only account for it by saying, that "a man may fall away from faith," and that "there is no such thing as perseverance." And, in short, this becomes an established principle in their religion.

Now this is a mischievous error, and I am afraid it is sadly common in many quarters. It may be traced to ignorance of the true nature of religious affections. People forget that there may be many religious emotions in the human mind with which the grace of God has nothing to do. The "stony-ground" hearers received the word with joy—but it had no root in them. (Matt. 13:20.) The history of all revivals proves that there may often be a great quantity of seemingly religious impression without any true work of the Spirit. Saving faith is something far deeper and mightier than a little sudden feeling. It is not an act of the feelings only—but of the whole conscience, will, understanding, and inward man. It is the result of clear knowledge. It springs from a conscience not grazed merely—but thoroughly stirred. It shows itself in a deliberate, willing, humble dependence on Christ. Such faith is the gift of God, and is never overthrown. Make faith a mere matter of feeling, and it is of course impossible to maintain perseverance.

(4) I believe another reason why many do not hold perseverance, is near akin to the one last mentioned. It is **an incorrect view of the nature of conversion**. Not a few are ready to pronounce any change for the better in a man's character, a conversion. They forget that there may be many blossoms on a tree in spring, and yet no fruit in autumn, and that a new coat of paint does not make an old door new. Some, if they see anyone weeping under the influence of a sermon, will put it down at once as a case of conversion! Others, if a neighbor suddenly gives up drinking, or swearing, or card-playing, and becomes a communicant and a great professor, at once rush to the conclusion that he is converted! The natural consequence in numerous instances is disappointment. Their supposed case of conversion often turns out nothing more than a case of outward reform, in which the heart was never changed. Their converted neighbor sometimes returns to his old bad habits, as the pig which was washed—to her wallowing in the mire. But then, unhappily, the pride of the natural heart, which never likes to allow itself mistaken, induces people to form a wrong conclusion about the case. Instead of telling us that the man never was converted at all, they say that "he was converted—but afterwards lost his grace and fell away." The true remedy for this is a right understanding of conversion. It is no such cheap, and easy, and common thing as many seem to fancy. It is a mighty work on the heart, which none but He who made the world can effect, and a work which will always abide and stand the fire. But once take a low and superficial view of conversion, and you will find it impossible to maintain final perseverance.

(5) I believe another most common reason why many do not hold perseverance, is **an incorrect view of the effect of baptism**. They lay it down, as a cardinal point in their theology, that all who are baptized are born again in baptism, and all receive the grace of the Holy Spirit. Without a single plain text in the Bible to support their opinions, and in the face of the 17th Article, which many of them as Churchmen have subscribed, they still tell us that all baptized people are necessarily "regenerate." Of course such a view of baptism is utterly destructive of the doctrine that true grace can never be overthrown. *It is plain as daylight, that multitudes of*

baptized people never show a spark of grace all their lives, and never give the slightest evidence of having been born of God. They live careless and worldly, and careless and worldly they die, and to all appearance miserably perish. According to the view to which I am now referring, "they have all fallen away from grace! They all had it! They were all made God's children! But they all lost their grace! They have all become children of the devil!" I will not trust myself to make a single remark on such doctrine. I leave those who can to reconcile it with the Bible. All I say is, that "if baptismal regeneration" be true, there is an end of final perseverance.

(6) I believe another reason why many do not hold perseverance, is **an incorrect view of the nature of the Church**. They make no distinction between the visible Church which contains "evil as well as good," and the invisible Church which is composed of none but God's elect and true believers. They apply to the one the privileges, and blessings, and promises which belong to the other. They call the visible Church, with its crowds of ungodly members, and baptized infidels, "the mystical body of Christ, the Bride, the Lamb's wife, the Holy Church," and the like! They will not see what Hooker long ago pointed out, and his admirers would do well to remember—that all these glorious titles do not properly belong to any visible Church—but to the mystical company of God's elect. The consequence of all this confusion is certain and plain. Upon this man-made system they are obliged to allow that thousands of members of Christ's body have no life, no grace, and no sympathy with their Head, and end at last by being ruined forever, and becoming lost members of Christ in hell! Of course at this rate they cannot maintain the doctrine of perseverance. Once embrace the unscriptural notion that all members of the visible Church are, by virtue of their churchmanship members of Christ, and the doctrine of this paper must be thrown aside. Oh, what a wise remark it is of Hooker's, "For lack of diligently observing the difference between the Church of God mystical and visible, the errors are neither few nor light that have been committed."

I commend the things I have just been saying to the sincere and prayerful attention of every reader of these pages. I have gone through them at the risk of seeming wearisome, from a deep conviction of their great importance. I am sure if any part of this paper deserves consideration, it is this.

I entreat you to observe how important it is for Christians to be sound in the faith, and to be armed with clear Scriptural knowledge of the whole system of the Gospel. I fear the increasing tendency to regard all doctrinal questions as matters of opinion, and to look on all "earnest-minded" people as right, whatever doctrines they maintain. I warn you that the sure result of giving way to this tendency will be a vague, low, misty theology—a theology containing no positive hope, no positive motive, and no positive consolation—a theology which will fail most, just when it is most needed—in the day of affliction, the hour of sickness, and on the bed of death.

I know well that it is a thankless office to offer such warnings as these. I know well that those who give them must expect to be called bigoted, narrow-minded, and exclusive. But I cannot review the many errors which prevail on the subject of perseverance, without seeing more than ever the immense need there is for urging on all to be careful about doctrine. Oh, learn to know what you mean when you talk of believing the doctrines of Christianity! Be able to give a reason of your hope. Be able to say what you think true, and what you think false in religion. And never, never forget that the only foundation of soundness in the faith, is a thorough textual knowledge of the Bible.

I entreat you, in the last place, to observe how one error in religion leads on to another. There is a close connection between false doctrines. It is almost impossible to take up one alone. Once let a man get wrong about the Church and the sacraments, and there is no saying how far he may go, and where he may land at last. It is a mistake at the fountain-head, and it influences the whole course of his religion. The mistake about baptism is a striking illustration of what I mean. It throws a color over the whole of a man's theology. It insensibly affects his views of justification, sanctification, election, and perseverance. It fills his mind with a tangled maze of confusion as to all the leading articles of the faith. He starts with a theory for which no single plain text of Scripture can be alleged, and before this theory he tramples down plain passages of the Bible by the score! They interfere forsooth, with his favorite theory, and therefore cannot mean what common sense tells us they do! **We ought to be as jealous about a little false doctrine, as we would be about a little sin!** Remember the words of Paul about false doctrine, "a little leaven leavens the whole lump." (Gal. 5:9.)

IV. I now proceed, in the last place, to mention some reasons why the doctrine of final perseverance is of great importance.

When I speak of the importance of perseverance, I do not for a moment mean that it is necessary to salvation to receive it. I freely grant that thousands and tens of thousands have gone to heaven, who believed all their lives that saints might fall away. But all this does not prove the doctrine maintained in this paper to be a matter of indifference. He who does not believe it, and yet is saved, no doubt does well; but I am persuaded that he who believes it and is saved, does far better. I hold it to be one of the chief privileges of the children of God, and I consider that no privilege contained in the Gospel can be lost sight of without injury to the soul.

(1) Perseverance is a doctrine of great importance because of **the strong color which it throws on the whole statement of the Gospel**. The grand characteristic of the Gospel is, that it is glad tidings. It is a message of peace to a rebellious world. It is good news from a far country, alike unexpected and undeserved. It is the glad tidings that there is a hope for us, lost, ruined, and bankrupt as we are by nature—a hope of pardon, a hope of reconciliation with God, a hope of glory. It is the glad tidings that the foundation of this hope is mighty, deep, and broad—that it is built on the atoning death and gracious mediation of a Savior. It is the glad tidings that this Savior is an actual living person, Jesus the Son of God; able to save to the uttermost all who come to God by Him, and no less merciful, compassionate, and ready to save than able. It is the glad tidings that the way to pardon and peace by this Savior is the simplest possible. It is not a thing high in heaven, that we cannot reach, or deep in the depths, that we cannot fathom. It is simply to believe, to trust, and to cast ourselves wholly on Jesus for salvation; and then salvation is all our own. It is the glad tidings that all who believe are at once justified and forgiven all things; their sins, however many, are washed away; their souls, however unworthy, are counted righteous before God. They believe on Jesus, and therefore they are saved. This is the good news. This is the glad tidings. This is the truth which is the grand peculiarity of the Gospel. Happy indeed is he who knows and believes it!

But think, for a moment, what a mighty difference it would make in the sound of the Gospel, if I went on to say, that after receiving all these mercies, that you might by-and-by lose them entirely. What would your feelings be if I told you that you were in daily peril of forfeiting all these privileges, and of having your pardon sealed in Christ's blood, taken back again? What would you think if I told you that your safety was yet an uncertain thing, and that you might yet perish, and never reach heaven at all? Oh, how discouraging this would seem! Oh, how much of the grace and beauty of the glorious Gospel would disappear and fade away! Yet this is literally and exactly the conclusion to which a denial of perseverance must bring us.

Once admit that the saints of God may perish, and you seem to me to tear from the Gospel crown it brightest jewel. We are hanging on the edge of a precipice. We are kept in awful suspense until we are dead. To tell us that there are plenty of gracious promises to encourage us—if we will only persevere—is but mockery. It is like telling the sick man that if he will only get well, he will be strong. The poor patient feels no confidence that he will get well, and the poor weak believer feels nothing in him like power to persevere. Today he may be in Canaan, and tomorrow he may be in Egypt again, and in bondage. This week he may be in the narrow way; but, for anything he knows, next week he may be back in the broad road. This month he may be a justified, pardoned, and forgiven man; but next month his pardon may be all revoked, and he himself in a state of condemnation. This year he may have faith, and be a child of God; next year he may be a child of the devil, and have no part or lot in Christ. Where is the good news in all this? What becomes of the glad tidings? Verily such doctrine seems to me to cut up the joy of the Gospel by the roots. Yet this is the doctrine we must hold, if we reject the final perseverance of the saints. "They weaken Christians' comfort that make believers walk with Christ, like dancers upon a rope, every moment in fear of breaking their necks!"—Manton. 1658.

I bless God that I am able to see another kind of Gospel than this in the Word of God. To my eyes the Bible seems to teach that he who once begins the life of faith in Christ, shall without doubt be preserved from apostasy, and come to a glorious end. Once made alive by the grace of God, he shall live forever. Once raised from the grave of sin and made a new man, he shall never go back to the grave, and become once more the old man "dead in trespasses and sins." He shall be kept by the power of God. He shall be more than conqueror through Him who loved him. The eternal God is his refuge; underneath him are the Everlasting Arms. The love in which he is interested is eternal. The righteousness in which he is clothed is eternal. The redemption which he enjoys is eternal. The sense and comfort of it he may lose by his own carelessness. But the thing itself, after once believing, is his for evermore.

Let any thinking man look at the two ways in which the weary and heavy-laden sinner may be addressed, and judge for himself which is most like the Gospel of the grace of God. On the one side stands the doctrine, which says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved. Once believing you shall never perish. Your faith shall never be allowed entirely to fail. You shall be sealed by the Holy Spirit unto the day of redemption." On the other side stands the doctrine, which says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved. But after you have believed—take care! Your faith may fail. You may fall away. You may drive the Spirit from you. You may at length perish everlastingly." Which doctrine of these two contains most good news? Which is most like glad tidings? Is it all the same which way the sinner is addressed? Is it a matter of indifference whether we tell him that believing he is saved, unless he falls away; or whether we tell him that believing he is saved forever? I cannot think it. I regard the difference between the two doctrines as very great indeed. It is the difference between January and June. It is the difference between twilight and noonday.

I speak for myself. I cannot answer for the experience of others. To give me solid peace, I must know something about my future prospects as well as about my present position. It is pleasant to see my pardon today—but I cannot help thinking of tomorrow. Tell me that the Holy Spirit, who leads me to Christ, and gives me repentance and faith in Him, will never leave me nor forsake me—and I feel solid comfort. My feet are on a rock. My soul is in safe hands. I shall get safely home. Tell me, on the other hand, that after being led to Christ I am left to my own vigilance, and that it depends on my watching, and praying, and care, whether the Spirit leaves me or not—and my heart melts within me. I stand on a quicksand. I lean on a broken reed. I shall never get to heaven. It is vain to tell me of the promises; that they are only mine if I walk worthy of them. It is vain to talk to me of Christ's mercy; I may lose all my interest in it by indolence and self-will. The absence of the doctrine of perseverance appears to me to give a different color to the whole Gospel of Christ. You cannot wonder if I regard it as of great importance.

(2) But the doctrine of perseverance is also of importance, because of **the special influence it is calculated to have on all who halt between two opinions in religion.**

There are many people of this description in the Church of Christ. There are hundreds to be found in every congregation to which the Gospel of Christ is preached, who know well what is right, and yet have not courage to act up to their knowledge. Their consciences are awakened. Their minds are comparatively enlightened. Their feelings are partially aroused to a sense of the value of their souls. They see the path they ought to take. They hope one day to be able to take it. But at present they sit still and wait. They will not take up the cross and confess Christ.

And what is it that keeps them back? In a vast proportion of cases they are afraid to begin, lest they should by-and-by fail and fall away. They see innumerable difficulties before them if they serve Christ. They are quite right. It is vain to deny that there are difficulties, both many and great. They stand shivering on the brink of the vast sea on which we would have them embark; and as they mark the rolling, tumbling waves, their hearts faint. They mark many a little boat on the waters of that sea, tossed to and fro, and struggling hard to make its way across, and looking as if it would be engulfed in the angry billows, and never get safe to harbor. "It is of no use," they feel, "it is of no use. We shall certainly fall away. We cannot serve Christ yet. The thing cannot be done."

Now, what is most likely to give courage to these halting souls? What is most likely to hearten them for the voyage? What is most likely to cheer their spirits, nerve their minds, and bring them to the point of boldly launching away? I answer, without hesitation, The doctrine of final perseverance.

I would gladly tell them that however great the difficulties of Christ's service, there is grace and strength in store to carry them triumphantly through all. I would tell them that these poor, praying, broken-spirited voyagers whom they watch, and expect to see cast away, are all as safe as if they were already in harbor. They have each a pilot on board, who will carry them safely through every storm. They are each joined to the everlasting God by a tie that can never be broken, and shall all appear at length, safe at the right hand of their Lord. Yes—and I would gladly tell them that they too shall all make a glorious end if they will only begin. I would have them know that, if they will only commit themselves to Christ, they shall never be cast away. They shall not be plucked away by Satan. They shall never be left to sink and come to shame. Trials they may have—but none that the Spirit will not give them power to endure. Temptations they may have—but none that the Spirit shall not enable them to resist. Only let them begin, and they shall be conquerors. But the great matter is to begin. I believe firmly that one reason why so many wavering Christians hang back from making a decided profession, is the lack of encouragement which the doctrine of perseverance is intended to afford.

(3) The doctrine of perseverance is of importance because of **the special influence it is calculated to have on the minds of true believers.**

The number of true believers is at all times very small. They are a little flock. But even out of that flock there are few who can be called strong in faith, few who know much of uninterrupted joy and peace in believing, few who are not often cast down by doubts, anxieties, and fears.

It is useless to deny that the way to heaven is narrow. There are many things to try the faith of believers. They have **trials** the world cannot understand. They have within a **heart** weak, deceitful, and not to be trusted—cold when they would gladly be warm—backward when they would gladly be forward—more ready to sleep than to watch. They have without a **world** that does not love Christ's truth and Christ's people—a world full of slander, ridicule, and persecution—a world with which their own dearest relations often join. They have ever near them a busy **devil**, an enemy who has been reading men's hearts for 6,000 years, and knows exactly how to suit and time his temptations—an enemy who never ceases to lay snares in their way—who never slumbers and never sleeps. They have the **cares of life** to attend to, like other people—the cares of children—the cares of business—the cares of money—the cares of earthly plans and arrangements—the cares of a poor weak body, each daily thrusting itself upon their souls. Who can wonder that believers are sometimes cast down? Who ought not rather to marvel that any believers are saved? Truly I often think that the salvation of each saved person is a greater miracle than the passage of Israel through the Red Sea.

"There are as many miracles wrought as a saint is preserved, as there are minutes."—Jenkyn. 1680.

But what is the best antidote against the believer's fears and anxieties? What is most likely to cheer him as he looks forward to the untried future and remembers the weary past? I answer without hesitation, the doctrine of the final perseverance of God's elect. Let him know that God having begun a good work in him will never allow it to be overthrown. Let him know that the footsteps of Christ's little flock are all in one direction. They have erred. They have been vexed. They have been tempted. But not one of them has been lost. Let him know that those whom Jesus loves, He loves unto the end. Let him know that He will not allow the weakest lamb in His flock to perish in the wilderness, or the tenderest flower in His garden to wither and die! Let him know that Daniel in the den of lions, the three children in the fiery furnace, Paul in the shipwreck, Noah in the Ark—were not more cared for and more secure than each believer in Christ is at the present day. Let him know that he is fenced, walled in, protected, guarded by the Almighty power of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—and cannot perish. Let him know that it is not in the power of things present or things to come—of people or of devils—of cares within or troubles without—to separate one single child of God from the love that is in Christ Jesus.

This is strong consolation! These are the things which God has laid up in the Gospel, for the establishment and confirmation of His people. Well would it be for His people if these things were more brought forward than they are in the Church of Christ. Verily I believe that one reason of the saints' weakness is their ignorance of the truths which God has revealed in order to make them strong.

I leave the subject of the importance of perseverance here. I trust I have said enough to show my readers that I have not called their attention to it in this paper without good cause. I feel strongly that the hardness of man's heart is such that nothing should be omitted in religious teaching which is likely to do it good. **I dare not omit a single grain of truth, however strong, and liable to abuse, it may seem to be.** Nothing appears to me of small importance which adds to the beauty of the Gospel, or gives encouragement to the halting, or confirms and builds up God's people. I desire to teach that the Gospel not only offers present pardon and peace—but eternal safety and certain continuance to the end. This I believe to be the mind of the Spirit. And what the Spirit reveals I desire to proclaim.

And now I have brought before my readers, to the best of my ability, the whole subject of perseverance. If I have failed to convince you, I am sorry—but I am satisfied the defect is not in the doctrine I defend—but in my manner of stating it. It only remains to conclude this paper by a few words of **PRACTICAL APPLICATION**.

(1) For one thing, let me entreat you to **thoroughly consider, whether you have any part at all in the salvation of Christ Jesus.**

It matters nothing what you believe about perseverance, if after all you have no true faith in Christ. It matters little whether you hold the doctrine or not, so long as you have no saving faith, and your sins are not forgiven, and your heart not renewed by the Holy Spirit. The clearest head-knowledge will save no man. The most correct and orthodox views will not prevent a man perishing by the side of the most ignorant heathen—if he is not born again. Oh, search and see what is the state of your own soul!

You cannot live forever. You must one day die. You cannot avoid the judgment after death. You must stand before the tribunal of Christ. The summons of the Archangel cannot be disobeyed. The last great assembly must be attended. The state of your own soul must one day undergo a thorough investigation. It will be found out one day what you are in God's sight. Your spiritual condition will at length be brought to light before the whole world. Oh, find out what it is now! While you have time, while you have health, find out the state of your soul.

Your danger, if you are not converted, is far greater than I can describe. Just in proportion to the thorough safety of the believer is the deadly peril of the unbeliever. There is but a step between the unbeliever and the worm that never dies, and the fire that is not quenched. He is literally hanging over the brink of the bottomless pit. Sudden death to the saint is sudden glory; but sudden death to the unconverted sinner, is sudden hell. Oh, search and see what is the state of your soul!

Remember that you may find out whether you have an interest in the invitations of the Gospel. It is a thing which may be known. It is nonsense to pretend that no man can tell. I never will believe that an honest man, with a Bible in his hand, will fail to discover his own spiritual condition by diligent self-examination. Oh, be an honest man! Search the Scriptures. Look within. Rest not until you find out the state of your soul. To live on and leave the soul's state uncertain, is not to play the part of a wise man—but of a fool.

(2) In the next place, **if you know nothing of the privileges of the Gospel, I entreat you this day to repent and be converted, to hear Christ's voice, and follow Him.**

I know no reason, human or divine, why you should not accept this invitation today and be saved, if you are really willing. It is not the quantity of your sins that need prevent you. All manner of sin may be forgiven. The blood of Jesus cleanses away all sin. It is not the hardness of your heart, that need prevent you. A new heart God will give you, and a new spirit will He put in you. It is not the

decrees of God that need prevent you. He wills not the death of sinners. He is not willing that any should perish—but that all should come to repentance. It is not any lack of willingness in Christ—He has long cried to the sons of men, "Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely." "Him who comes unto Me I will never cast out." Oh, why should not you be saved? (Rev. 22:17; John 6:37.)

A day must come, if you are ever to be God's child, when you will cease to trifle with your soul's interests. An hour must come when at last you will bend your knee in real earnestness, and pour out your heart before God in real prayer. A time must come when the burden of your sins will at last feel intolerable, and when you will feel you must have rest in Christ or perish. All this must come to pass, if you are ever to become a child of God and be saved. And why not today? Why not this very night? Why not without delay seek Christ and live? Answer me, if you can!

(3) In the next place, let me **entreat every reader who holds final perseverance, so to use this precious doctrine as not to abuse it.**

There is an awful readiness in all people to abuse God's mercies. Even the children of God are not free from the sad infection. There is a busy devil near the best of saints, who would gladly persuade them to make their privileges a plea for careless living, and to turn their soul's food into poison. I cannot look round the Church of Christ, and see the end to which many high professors come, without feeling that there is need for a caution. "Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall." (1 Cor. 10:12.)

Would we know what it is to abuse the doctrine of perseverance? It is abused when believers make their safety an excuse for inconsistencies in practice. It is abused when they make their security from final ruin an apology for a low standard of sanctification, and a distant walk with God. Against both these abuses I entreat believers to be on their guard.

Would we know what it is to use the doctrine of perseverance aright? Let us watch jealously over the daily workings of our own hearts. Let us mortify and nip in the bud the least inclination to spiritual indolence. Let us settle it down in our minds, as a ruling principle of our lives, that the mercies of God are only turned to a good account when they have a sanctifying effect on our hearts. Let us root it firmly in our inward man, that the love of Christ is never so really valued as when it constrains us to increased spiritual-mindedness. Let us set before our minds, that the more safe we feel—the more holy we ought to be. The more we realize that God has done much for us, the more we ought to do for God. The greater our debt, the greater should be our gratitude. The more we see the riches of grace, the more rich should we be in good works.

Oh, for a heart like that of the Apostle Paul! To realize as he did, our perfect safety in Christ—to labor as he did for God's glory, as if we could never do too much—this is the mark—this is the standard at which we ought to aim. Let us so use the doctrine of perseverance that our good may never be evil spoken of.

Let us so adorn the doctrine by our lives that we may make it beautiful to others, and constrain people to say, "It is a good and holy thing to be persuaded that saints shall never perish."

(4) In the last place, I **entreat all believers who have hitherto been afraid of falling away—to lay firm hold on the doctrine of perseverance, and to realize their own safety in Christ.**

I want you to know the length and breadth of your portion in Christ. I want you to understand the full amount of the treasure to which faith in Jesus entitles you. You have found out that you are a great sinner. Thank God for that. You have fled to Christ for pardon and peace with God. Thank God for that. You have committed yourself to Jesus for time and eternity—you have no hope but in Christ's blood, Christ's righteousness Christ's mediation, Christ's daily all-persevering intercession. Thank God for that. Your heart's desire and prayer is to be holy in all manner of conversation. Thank God for that. But oh, lay hold upon the glorious truth—that believing on Jesus you shall never perish, you shall never be cast away, you shall never fall away! It is written for you as well as for the apostles, "My sheep shall never perish."

Yes! Jesus has spoken it—and Jesus meant it to be believed. Jesus has spoken it—and He never brakes His promises. Jesus has spoken it—and He cannot lie. Jesus has spoken it—and He has all power in heaven and earth to keep His word. Jesus has spoken it for the least and lowest believers, "My sheep shall never perish."

Would you have perfect peace in life? Then lay hold on this doctrine of perseverance. Your TRIALS may be many and great. Your cross may be very heavy. But the business of your soul is all conducted according to an "everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure." (2 Sam. 23:5.) All things are working together for your good. Your sorrows are only purifying your soul for glory. Your bereavements are only fashioning you as a polished stone for the temple above, made without hands. From whatever quarter the storms blow, they only drive you nearer to heaven. Whatever weather you may go through it is only ripening you for the garner of God. Your best things are quite safe. Come what will, you shall "never perish."

Would you have strong consolation in SICKNESS? Then lay hold on this doctrine of perseverance. Think, as you feel the pins of this earthly tabernacle loosening one by one, "nothing can break my union with Christ." Your body may become useless; your limbs may refuse to perform their office; you may feel like an old useless log—a weariness to others, and a burden to yourself. But your soul is safe! Jesus is never tired of caring for your soul. You shall "never perish."

Would you have full assurance of hope in DEATH? Then lay hold on this doctrine of perseverance. Doctors may have given over their labors; friends may be unable to minister to your needs; sight may depart; hearing may depart; memory may be almost gone—but the loving-kindness of God shall not depart. Once in Christ you shall never be forsaken. Jesus shall stand by you. Satan shall not harm you. Death shall not separate you from the everlasting love of God in Christ. You shall "never perish!"

The deathbed of Bruce, the famous Scotch divine, is a striking illustration of this part of my subject. Fleming describes it in the following words. "He called for his Bible; but finding his sight gone, he said, 'Turn to the eighth chapter of Romans and set my finger on these words—I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, etc., shall be able to separate me from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.' 'Now,' said he, 'is my finger upon them?' When they told him it was, he said, 'Now God be with you, my children—I have breakfasted with you, and shall sup with my Lord Jesus Christ this night!' And then he died."

Tried by Its Fruits

J. C. Ryle

"Every tree is known by his own fruit." Luke 6:44

Our lot is cast in times when there is a tendency to try all ancient institutions by their results. Schools, colleges, universities, corporations, old endowed charities, all are successively put into the crucible, and placed in the furnace. "Will an institution stand the fire? Is the result of the operation, dross or good metal?" These are the only questions which men require to be answered.

Now, I wish to apply this great principle to the religion which our Lord Jesus Christ brought into the world nineteen hundred years ago. Some men tell us that it is an effete and worn-out thing, utterly unsuited to the twentieth century. Christianity, in short, is regarded with contempt by many who call themselves leaders of thought in modern times. Like an old almanac, its work is done, and it may be thrown aside! Its Bible and its Sundays, its ministers and its worship, its prayers and its sacraments, all are unworthy of the notice of intellectual men, and may be safely neglected, smiled at, and handed over to the ignorant and the poor! Such is the line of thinking, writing, and talking in too many quarters.

Now, my simple object in this paper is to point out the unreasonableness, not to say dishonesty, of ignoring the enormous results and effects which Christianity has produced in the world. I ask the sceptic and the agnostic to *try Christianity by its fruits*. I defy them to deny the existence of those fruits. I say that mankind owes a huge debt to Christianity, whether mankind knows it or not, of which the amount can never be calculated. In short, the fruits of Christianity are an unanswerable proof to my own mind of its Divine origin, and a stupendous difficulty in the way of infidelity, which has never been fairly grappled with or explained away. They demand attention. They court investigation.

There are only two points to which I shall invite the attention of my readers.

I. For one thing, let us consider briefly some of the fruits which Christianity has produced in the world.

II. For another, let us consider the leading doctrines by whose agency these fruits have been produced.

I do not for a moment pretend to bring forward anything new or deep. I am going to speak of ancient, familiar things, which anyone of average intelligence can understand. But it is precisely the simplicity of my argument which makes many overlook it. We have so many great swelling words in this day from the enemies of Christianity, about "laws of nature, development, matter, germs, force," and the like, that we are apt to forget the immense mass of evidence in favor of revealed religion which is lying close by our side.

I. In the first place, what fruits has Christianity produced in the world?

We are not fit to consider this question, unless we realize the actual condition of the world when Christianity was introduced. We must remember that the Augustan age, when the Lord Jesus Christ was born and His Church founded, was the era when heathenism had carried art and literature to the highest pitch of excellence. Even at this day the temples of Luxor and Carnac, the Parthenon at Athens, and the Coliseum at Rome—are among the most remarkable buildings in the world. The works of Homer, and Herodotus, and Thucydides, and Eschylus, and Sophocles, and Euripides, and Plato, among the *Greeks*—of Cicero, and Tacitus, and Virgil, and Horace, among the *Romans*—are admired and read by almost all educated men, and in their way are unsurpassed after nineteen centuries have passed away. In short, if the education of mind, and reason, and intellect, and the cultivation of art and literature, could make men holy and happy in this life, and give them a good hope for the life to come, the world, before Christ, did not need the introduction of Christianity.

But what was the world before Christ, even the most polished and refined portion of it—in the matter of religion and morality? That is the question. The answer may be given in the words of Paul, "The world by wisdom knew not God" (1 Cor. 1. 21). Darkness, thick darkness, covered the earth. Athens and Rome were full of magnificent temples, in which men worshiped images of gold, and silver, and wood, and stone—the work of their own hands. The greatest philosophers, such as Socrates, groped, as in the night. The doctrine of the Being of the true God seems to have been completely lost—and in its place the most debasing idolatry and groveling superstition universally prevailed.

The following passage from Wilson's admirable Lectures on Christian Evidences, contains a picture which I believe is not one bit over-colored, "Whether you consider the barbarian nations, or those which were most polished—whether you look back to the earliest times of which we have any authentic history, or those nearer the birth of our Lord—all was one thick, impenetrable mass of moral disorder and ruin. The most abject and disgusting idolatry, the worship of the beasts and birds, of stocks and stones, the deification of kings and warriors, of human virtues and vices, of insects and creeping things, and even of that most disgusting of all reptiles, the serpent, prevailed. The most atrocious practices were interwoven with the histories and ceremonies of these wretched deities. From this source, aided by the corrupt heart of man, flowed out a torrent of vices and abominations in public and private life. Fraud, theft, rapine, revenge, suicide, fornication, adultery, murder of infants, unnatural crimes, the atrocious cruelties of war, the slavery and oppression of captives, gladiatorial shows—not only abounded, but were patronized and practiced by the great body of men."

Hear what Wilson says in another passage—"The heathen were impure and abominable even in their religion. Their gods and goddesses were profligate, impure, revengeful, odious. The very light that was in them was darkness. For what could the histories of Jupiter, Juno, and Bacchus, and Mercury, and Venus teach—but vice and drunkenness, and lewdness, and theft, and fraud! How heinous were the Floralia, and Bacchanalia, and Saturnalia! 'It is a shame,' observes the great Apostle, 'even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret' (Ephes. v. 12). Christians, as individuals, may be wicked and unjust, and, alas! often are so. But this is notwithstanding their religion, and in spite of it, as Warburton has fairly remarked, and therefore cases of the grossest iniquity are rare. The heathen, on the contrary, were impure and abominable in consequence of their religion, and because of it; and therefore a depravity of which we have scarcely a conception prevailed—and virtue and purity were rare and uncommon."

Now I believe this terrible picture of the world before Christ is not one bit overdrawn. I believe it would be easy to confirm its accuracy by reference to Greek and Latin authors. But it would be impossible to do so without bringing forward things of which "it is a shame even to speak." I only ask Christians to remember that the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, which is often not read through in public, contains a plain, unvarnished description of heathenism as it really was in the days of Paul.

But what was the agency by which this awful state of things in the heathen world was altered, amended, and gradually swept away throughout all the Roman empire? That it has been swept away is a simple historical fact. But what wrought the change? What was it that emptied the heathen temples, destroyed the vocation of the idolatrous priesthood, raised the whole standard of morality, and, to use the words of Scripture, "turned the world upside down?" (Acts 17. 6). I answer, unhesitatingly, the introduction and progress of Christianity! How vast, and wide, and deep the change was we can hardly realize at this present day. What is before our eyes in Europe we know. What was, when heathenism reigned supreme, we cannot grasp and take in.

I ask your attention to the following eloquent passage from the pen of a writer.

"The argument which meets us first in surveying the history of Christianity, and in estimating the outstanding and singular features of its success—is its early, wide, and within certain limits absolutely irresistible diffusion. Other facts attest this: but I select one as to which there can be no controversy, the extirpation by it of idolatry such as existed in the old Roman world. That system, from the Euphrates to the furthest shore of Britain, from the Nile to the forest of Germany, has utterly passed away. The whole regions around the Mediterranean, to the limits of civilization, and beyond them, 'have changed their gods;' and the great decisive, all-prevailing impulses have come from Christianity. The classic Paganism, Greek and Roman, the Assyrian, the Egyptian and North African, the Druidic, and ultimately the Teutonic—have all fallen to rise no more; and at this moment there is not on the face of the earth a single worshipper of the 'great goddess Diana,' or, 'the image that fell down from Jupiter,' of Baal or Dagon, of Isis or Serapis, of Thor or Odin. They are preserved in imperishable literature, and in equally imperishable art. Homer and the great tragedians have enshrined them. Virgil and Ovid record them, and even Milton in his Paradise Lost; to say nothing of that wonderful Book, which, in revealing their abominations, will be found to have carried furthest and widest their memory. But not a single shrine remains to them in the proper sense of the word, not even where the Apollo, or Venus, the Minerva, or Hercules, enchain universal admiration. They are abolished as idols, while immortalized as relics; and not even the exquisite beauty lavished upon them can hide the moral deformity to which they owe their downfall. It is long centuries since one simple soul regarded them with anything of the feeling with which the African trembles before the rudest fetish, or the Hindoo before the most unsightly of his divinities. Another conquest so complete and absolute does not mark the history of the world. All ranks and classes passed through the revolution. The farmer had to give up his offerings to Liber and Ceres, the sailor his votive tablets to Neptune, the soldier his chaplets to Mars. The youth had to forget his place in the procession, the virgin her part in the dance, or secular games. The senator had to forego his libation on entering the senate, the general his search after the omens before battle, the very emperor the honor of his own coins and titles of divinity. What but an immense and boundless power could have wrought this change, and wrought it, not by constraint, but willingly, through the force of persuasion?" (The Success of Christianity, by Cairns, pp. 5, 6).

Will any of those who profess to deny the truth of Christianity deny the facts which this passage contains? It is impossible. He will find all history against him. But if he cannot deny the facts, he ought to tell us how they can on his principles be accounted for. We say they are irrefragable and unanswerable proofs that Christianity came down from God.

Great, however, as the fruits of Christianity have been in the overthrow and destruction of idolatry, they are fully equaled, if not surpassed, by the **enormous practical results which Christianity has produced on the moral standard and social conduct of mankind**. About human life and property—about women, children, servants, and the poor—about justice and equity between man and man—about decency, purity, and charity—about all these subjects the standard of public opinion has been entirely changed since the Gospel leavened the Roman world.

Once more I ask attention to a passage in which another writer has ably summed up the practical results of Christianity.

"We fear no challenge when we affirm that in its purest form Christianity has fostered the ideas, and encouraged the habits out of which all true civilization springs. It has fostered regard for *man* as essentially a noble being, having an immortal soul made in God's image, with boundless capacities of expansion and improvement; regard for *woman* as the helpmeet and companion of man—not his drudge, or slave, or concubine; regard for *marriage* as a holy contract entered into before God, not to be lightly set aside; regard for *children* as the heritage of the Lord—not burdens or encumbrances, but lent by the Lord to be brought up for Him; regard for the *family* as a divine institution, intended to be a fountain of holy joys, and a nursery of all wholesome habits, and all kindly affections: regard for the *sick*, the *infirm*, and the *aged*, whose sorrows we are ever to pity, and whose privations we are to make up in some measure from our more ample stores. The very word *Christian*, in its true spirit, has been identified with all these ideas and habits; in that sense it has a glory all its own." (Christianity and Secularism, by Dr. Blaikie, p. 5).

It would be perfectly easy to add to the statements contained in this passage, if time and space permitted. The difficulty in the matter is not so much the *discovery* of evidence as the *selection* of it. The mass of facts which might be adduced to show the rich and blessed fruits of Christianity is simply enormous, and I pity the sceptic who refuses to look at it. To those who care to investigate the subject more fully I strongly recommend two volumes which have recently been published. One is called "Gesta Christi," by an American writer named Brace. The other is called Modern Missions and Culture, by Dr. Werneck, a German. Each of these volumes contains a vast quantity of valuable information which is accessible to few English readers, and will richly repay perusal.

I admit, most fully, that there have been periods during the last nineteen centuries, when the fruits of Christianity have been miserably scanty and poor, and the tree which bore them has seemed rotten and only fit to be cut down. I do not forget the corruption of faith and practice in the dark ages—the hideous immorality of many bishops of Rome—the vile doings of many monasteries and nunneries—the ignorance and superstition of priests—the groveling superstition of laymen. These are things I do not pretend to deny. I grant that the tide of truth sometimes ebbed so low that it was almost out of sight, and the light was so dim that it was well-near extinguished. But it must be remembered that in the worst times, there were always some men who protested loudly against the wickedness around them, such as Bradwardine, and Grostete, and Wycliffe, and John Huss, and Jerome of Prague, and Savonarola. And there were always some scattered bodies of Christians who, by life and doctrine, witnessed faithfully against corruption, such as the Valenses and Albigenses, the Waldensian Churches, and the Lollards. And, after all, if the state of the Roman world in the days of

the Apostle, and the state of the world at this day could be fairly compared, there is not the slightest doubt what the verdict would be. The change for the better would be found so vast—that no words could describe it. The fruits of Christianity are such, in spite of all failures and defects, that the moral difference between the world before Christ and the world after Christ is the difference between gold and dross, sweet and bitter, white and black, darkness and light!

The plain truth is, that we are all so familiar with the public blessings which Christianity has insensibly conferred on the world, that we cannot realize the condition of things from which it has delivered us. Few men take the trouble to read or think about anything except eating, drinking, dressing, business, politics, recreation, money, and temporalities. The many never reflect on the enormous debt which they daily owe to the effects of Bible religion, and the very Christianity which so many pretend to despise. Does the infidel, who lies in some hospital for weeks, tenderly nursed and cared for—ever reflect that without Christianity there would have been no hospital at all? I doubt it. Does the British workman, who never goes to a place of worship, and never reads his Bible, and often sneers at parsons—ever reflect that without Christianity he would never have been sure of his wages, and would have often been treated as a slave and a serf? I doubt it. Does the high-born woman of fashion, who makes a god of dress and amusement, and regards "religious people" with ill-disguised contempt—ever reflect that without Christianity she would have enjoyed little liberty of action, little independence of thought or choice, and her very honor would have been little respected. I doubt it. Does the scientific agnostic, who sits at home at ease, and despises churches, clergymen, and Bibles, and ignores his soul—does he ever fairly and honestly reflect that without Christianity he would have had little safety for property, home, or person, little liberty of thought, and little chance of justice if he came in collision with the ruling power? Does he, I say, think of all this? Once more, I say, I doubt it. In short, I am firmly convinced that of all the debts which have been repudiated since creation, there never was one so shamefully ignored and repudiated as the debt which the world owes to Christianity! If revealed religion could only be fairly tried by its fruits, there is no doubt what the verdict would be. Secularism, agnosticism, scepticism, and infidelity would be confounded and silenced forever. I will now turn to the other point which I undertook to consider.

II. Let us inquire what were the leading doctrines of Christianity by the agency of which its fruits have been produced.

I regard this point as one of great importance. It is certain that *not* everything *called* Christianity, is the Christianity which was taught by Christ and His Apostles. It is equally certain that nothing but "the tree" that they planted, will ever bear good fruit. To expect good fruit from the grossly unscriptural religion of pre-Reformation days, or from the *vague, hazy, broad, boneless, jelly-fish teaching*, which many call religion in the twentieth century, is unreasonable and absurd. Such religions never yet bore good fruit—they never can and they never will.

Fruit-bearing Christianity has never been a mere *vicarious* religion. By that I mean a religion which teaches men to put their souls in the hands of a *priest*, and to leave him to settle matters between them and God. Nor yet has it been a mere *formal* and *ceremonial* religion. By that I mean a religion which teaches men to rest in the observation of times and seasons, and gestures and postures, and bodily acts, in which the heart and soul have nothing to do. Nor yet has it been a religion of mere *asceticism*. By that I mean a religion which teaches men and women that the way to please God is to shut ourselves up in monasteries and nunneries, and leave the world to itself. Nor yet has it been a *mind-cramping* religion. By that I mean a religion which teaches men that they must not think and read for themselves, but must shut their eyes, and hear the Church, and believe whatever they are told. Christianity of these kinds, I repeat emphatically, has never borne good fruit. Whenever and wherever it has prevailed, in any country or at any era, such religion has done little or no good to the world. It has made no mark on lives or characters. It has been no better than a refined and polished heathenism, a stuffed carcass, a whitened sepulchre, a body without life. It has certainly supplied no evidence to silence the sceptic, or to prove the truth of Divine revelation.

The Christianity which I call fruit-bearing—which shows its Divine origin by its blessed effects on mankind—the Christianity which you may safely defy infidels to explain away—that Christianity is a very different thing. Let me show you some of its leading marks and features.

(1) True Christianity has always taught the inspiration, sufficiency, and supremacy of **Holy Scripture**. It has told men that "God's written Word" is the only trustworthy rule of faith and practice in religion; that God requires nothing to be believed that is not in this Word; and that nothing is right which contradicts it. It has never allowed reason, or the voice of the Church, to be placed above, or on a level with Scripture. It has steadily maintained that, however imperfectly we may understand it, the Old Book is meant to be the only standard of life and doctrine.

(2) True Christianity has always taught fully the sinfulness, guilt and corruption of **human nature**. It has told men, that they are born in sin, deserve God's wrath and condemnation, and are naturally inclined to do evil. It has never allowed that men and women are only weak and pitiable creatures, who can become good when they please, and make their own peace with God. On the contrary, it has steadily declared man's danger and vileness, and his pressing need of a Divine forgiveness and atonement for his sins, a new birth or conversion, and an entire change of heart.

(3) True Christianity has always set before men, the Lord **Jesus Christ** as the chief object of faith and hope in religion--as the Divine Mediator between God and men, the only source of peace of conscience, and the root of all spiritual life. It has never been content to teach that He is merely our Prophet, our Example, and our Judge. The main things it has ever insisted on about Christ--are the atonement for sin He made by His death, His sacrifice on the cross, the complete redemption from guilt and condemnation by His blood, His victory over the grave by His resurrection, His active life of intercession at God's right hand, and the absolute necessity of simple faith in Him. In short, it has made Christ the Alpha and the Omega in Christian theology.

(4) True Christianity has always honored the Person of God the **Holy Spirit**, and magnified His work. It has never taught that all professing Christians have the grace of the Spirit in their hearts, as a matter of course--because they are baptized, or because they belong to the Church. It has steadily maintained that the fruits of the Spirit are the only evidence of having the Spirit, and that those fruits must be seen! It has always taught, that we must be born of the Spirit, led by the Spirit, sanctified by the Spirit, and feel the operations of the Spirit—and that a close walk with God in the path of His commandments, a life of holiness, love, self-denial, purity, and zeal to do good--are the only satisfactory marks of the Holy Spirit.

Such is true Christianity. Well would it have been for the world if there had been more of it during the last nineteen centuries! Too often, and in too many parts of Christendom, there has been so little of it--that Christ's religion has seemed extinct, and has fallen into utter contempt! But just in proportion as such Christianity as I have described has prevailed--the world has benefitted, the infidel been silenced, and the truth of Divine revelation been acknowledged. The tree has been known by its fruit.

This is the Christianity which, in the days of the Apostles, "turned the world upside down." It was this that emptied the idol temples of their worshipers, routed the Greek and Roman philosophers, and obliged even heathen writers to confess that the followers of the "new superstition," as they called it, were people who loved one another, and lived very pure and holy lives!

This is the Christianity which, after dreary centuries of ignorance, priestcraft, and superstition, produced the Protestant Reformation, and changed the history of Europe. The leading doctrines which were preached by Luther and Zwingli on the Continent, and by Latimer and his companions in England, were precisely those which I have briefly described. That they bore rich fruit, in an immense increase of general morality and holiness, is a simple fact which no historian has ever denied.

This is the Christianity which, in the middle of last century, delivered our own Church from the state of deadness and darkness into which she had fallen. The main truths on which Whitfield, and Wesley, and Romaine, and Venn, and their companions, continually insisted, were the truth about sin, Christ, the Holy Spirit, and holiness. And the results were the same as they were in the primitive days, and at the era the Reformation. Men persecuted and hated all who taught these truths. But no one could say that they did not make men live and die well.

This is the Christianity which is doing good at this day, wherever good is done. Search the missionary stations in Africa, India, or China. Visit the great over-grown, semi-heathen parishes in colliery districts or manufacturing towns in our own land. In every case you will find the same report must be made. The only religious teaching which can show solid, positive results, is that which gives prominence to the doctrines which I have endeavored to describe. Wherever they are rightly taught, Christianity can point to fruits which are an unanswerable proof of its Divine origin.

So much for fruit-bearing Christianity. I leave the subject with one remark about it. Let it never be forgotten, that its leading principles are those which are least likely to please the natural man. On the contrary, they are precisely those which are calculated to be unpopular and to give offence. Proud man does not like to be told that he is a weak, guilty sinner—that he cannot save his own soul, and must trust in the work of another—that he must be converted and have a new heart—that he must live a holy, self-denying life, and come out from the world. Surely the mere fact that this kind of unpopular teaching characterizes successful Christianity, and bears fruit in the world, is a strong evidence that Christianity is a Divine revelation, and really comes from God.

And now I will conclude this paper with four words of **PRACTICAL APPLICATION**, which I shall address to four different classes of people.

1. In the first place, I have a word for those who are tempted to give way to scepticism and unbelief, and are half disposed to throw overboard Christianity altogether. What shall I say to you? Listen, and I will tell you.

I entreat you, before you go any further, to deal honestly with the Christian religion and those who profess it, and try it by its fruits. That there is such a religion in the midst of us, and that there are thousands who profess it, are simple facts which nobody can deny. These thousands believe certain great truths of Christianity, and live and die in their belief. Let it be admitted that, in some points, these men of faith do not agree—such as the Church, the ministry, and the sacraments. But after every deduction, there remains an immense amount of common theology, about which their faith is one. On such points as sin, and God, and Christ, and the atonement, and the authority of the Bible, and the importance of holiness, and the necessity of prayer, and self-denial, and the value of the soul, and the reality of heaven and hell, and judgment, and eternity—on such points as these, I say, all Christian men are very much of one mind.

Now, I ask all sceptics and agnostics, is it honest to turn away from this Christian religion with contempt, because those who profess it have many weaknesses and infirmities? Is it fair to despise their religion, and wrap yourself up in unbelief, because of their controversies and strifes, their feeble literature and their party spirit? Is it fair to ignore the fruits of peace, and hope and comfort, which they enjoy? Mark the solid work which, with all their faults, they do in the world—in lessening sorrow and sin, and increasing happiness, and improving their fellow-men. What fruits and work can unbelief show which will bear comparison with the fruits of faith? What good has secularism, or agnosticism, or deism, done to mankind? What missions have they sent forth to the world? What cities or countries on earth have they civilized, purified, and made more holy and happy? What have the *gods* which some despisers of revelation seem to worship—evolution, development, matter, force, destiny—what have they done to enable men to meet the many ills to which all flesh is heir? What aching consciences have they relieved? What broken hearts have they bound up? What sick-beds have they cheered? What bereaved parents and widows have they comforted? We ask in vain! We shall get no answer! Look these facts in the face—and deal honestly with them. Systems ought to be judged by their "fruits" and results. When the so-called systems of modern unbelief and scepticism, and free thought, can point to as much good done in the world by their adherents as Christianity has done by the hand of its friends, we may give them some attention. But until they do that, I boldly say that the simple, old-fashioned Christianity has a just claim on our respect, esteem, and obedience, and ought *not* to be lightly esteemed, ridiculed, or despised.

2. In the second place, I have a word for those professing Christians who have no life or reality in their religion, and are only nominal members of Christ's Church. I need hardly say there are myriads of people in this condition. They are not sceptics, and would be justly offended if you called them infidels or agnostics. Yet, if truth must be spoken, except going to church or chapel on Sundays, they give no evidence of true Christianity. If you mark their daily life, they seem neither to think, nor feel, nor care for their souls, or God, or eternity.

Now, I warn any readers of this paper who are in this state, and I say it with pain, that *you* are the true cause of a vast proportion of infidelity! I remember a careless sceptic saying—"Do you think I am going to believe your Christianity when I see so many of your church-goers behaving as they do? Do you mean to tell me that they think their creed is true, and that they really believe in a resurrection and a judgment to come? It will be time enough for me to believe—when I see your people *really* believing. At present

your Christianity seems a great sham and a mere form." Alas! such talk as this is only too much justified by facts. Nothing, nothing, I am convinced, does so much to help the progress of modern infidelity—as the utter absence of reality and earnestness among professing Christians. Men and women who crowd churches on Sundays—and then live worldly selfish lives all the week—are the best and most efficient allies of the devil. "If you believed what you repeat under the pulpit," the sceptic says, "you would never live as you live at home." Oh! that people would think of the mischief done by inconsistency. "Awake, you who sleep—and arise from the dead." It is bad enough to ruin your own soul. But do not add to your sin by ruining others.

3. In the third place, I have a word for those sincere but weak-minded Christians who are surprised and frightened at the unbelief of these latter days, and live in a constant state of panic and alarm. What shall I say to you? Listen, and I will tell you.

I ask you, then, to look to your Bibles, and lay aside your fears. There is nothing in *unbelief* which ought to surprise you. Search the Scriptures, and you will find that the unbelief of the twentieth century is only *an old enemy in a new dress*—an *old disease in a new form*. Since the day when Adam and Eve fell, the devil has never ceased to tempt men not to believe God, and has said, directly or indirectly, "You shall not die even if you do not believe." In the latter days especially we have warrant of Scripture for expecting an abundant crop of unbelief: "When the Son of Man comes, shall he find faith on the earth?" "Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse." "There shall come in the last days scoffers." (Luke 18. 5; 2 Tim. 3. 13; 2 Peter 3. 3). Here in England, scepticism is that natural rebound from semi-popery and superstition, which many wise men have long predicted and expected. It is precisely that swing of the pendulum which far-sighted students of human nature anticipated—and it has come.

But as I tell you not to be surprised at the widespread scepticism of the times, so also I must urge you not to be shaken in mind by it, or moved from your steadfastness. There is no real cause for alarm. The ark of God is not in danger, though the oxen seem to shake it. Christianity has survived the attacks of Hume and Hobbes and Tindal—of Collins and Woolston and Bolingbroke and Chubb—of Voltaire and Payne and Holyoake. These men made a great noise in their day, and frightened weak people—but they produced no more effect than idle travelers produce, by scratching their names on the pyramid of Egypt. Depend on it, Christianity in like manner will survive the attacks of the clever writers of these times! The startling novelty of many modern objections to Revelation, no doubt, makes them seem more weighty than they really are. It does not follow, however, that *hard knots* cannot be *untied*—because *our* fingers cannot untie them; or that *formidable difficulties* cannot be explained—because our eyes cannot see through or explain them. When you cannot answer a sceptic, be content to *wait* for more light; but never forsake a great principle. In religion, as in many scientific questions, said Faraday, "the highest wisdom is often a judicious suspense." We can afford to wait.

4. In the last place, I have a word for all true believers who lament the spread of unbelief, though their own faith is unshaken. What shall I say to them? What advice shall I offer? Listen, and I will tell you.

I must plainly say, and I say it with sorrow, that we who profess the Christian faith, and are never troubled with unbelief, are not altogether free from blame. Too often our faith is little better than a mere "mental assent" to certain theological propositions, but not a living, burning, active principle, which works by love, purifies the heart, overcomes the world, and brings forth much fruit of holiness and good works. It is not the faith which made primitive Christians rejoice under Roman persecution, and made Luther stand up boldly before the Diet of Worms, and made Ridley and Latimer "love not their lives to the death," and made Wesley give up his position at Oxford to become an evangelist of England. We are truly guilty in this matter. If there was more real living faith on earth —I suspect there would be less unbelief. Scepticism, in many a case, would shrink, and dwindle, and melt away—if it saw faith more awake, and alive, and active, and stirring. Let us, for Christ's sake, and the sake of souls, amend our ways in this matter. Let us pray daily, "Lord, increase our faith." Let us live, and move, and have our being, and deal with men, as if we really believed every jot and tittle of Scripture, and as if a dying, risen, interceding, and coming Christ were continually before our eyes! We may depend on it the old saying is true—"the inconsistency of believers is the infidel's best argument."

This, I am firmly convinced, is the surest way to oppose and diminish unbelief. Let the time past suffice us to have lived content with a cold, tame *assent to creeds*. Let the time to come find us living, active believers. It was a solemn saying which fell from the lips of an eminent minister of Christ on his death-bed, "We are none of us more than half awake!" If believers were more thorough, and real, and whole-hearted in their belief, there would be far less unbelief in the world.

The words at the head of this paper contain a mine of truth—"Every tree is known by his own fruit." If the tree of Christianity bore more fruit, the axe of infidelity would never harm it—and would be laid to its root in vain!

THE CHRISTIAN RACE

by J. C. Ryle

"Therefore let us also, seeing we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, lay aside every weight and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with patience **the race** that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising its shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Hebrews 12:1-2)

Beloved, I have lately spoken to you much about the character and experience of true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, the men who are sowing for everlasting life.

Before, however, we continue this inquiry, I wish to warn you against forgetting the sure foundation; I wish to caution you most strongly against losing sight of the root of the whole matter—a simple faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. You must not stumble at the outset by supposing I want you to set up a righteousness of your own. Some think their own endeavors after holiness are to make up their title to salvation; some think that when they come to Christ, their 'past sins' alone are forgiven, and for the time to come, they must depend upon themselves. Alas! there always have been mistakes upon this point: men toil and labor after peace with God as if their own exertions would give them a right to lay hold on Christ, and when they find themselves far short of the Bible standard they mourn and grieve and will not be comforted; and all because they will not see that in the matter of forgiveness, in the matter of

justification in the sight of God, it is not *doing* which is required—but *believing;* it is not working—but trusting; it is not perfect obedience—but humble faith.

Now, once for all, let us understand, that all who have really fled for mercy to the Lord Jesus Christ are, as Paul assures the Colossians, complete in Him! In themselves they may be poor shortcoming sinners—but seeing they have laid hold on Christ, God looks upon them as complete—completely pardoned, completely righteous, completely pure—no jot or tittle of condemnation can be laid to their charge.

They have nothing more to do with the law as a covenant of works, as a condition they must fulfill or die: the Lord does not say, "Be perfect and then you shall live," but "Christ has given you life, and for His sake strive to be perfect." But you will ask me, "Why do they hunger and thirst so much after holiness, since all their debt has been paid?" I answer, They work for love's sake—for gratitude; they do not work and strive after holiness in order that they may be forgiven—but because they are forgiven already, chosen and sealed and saved and redeemed and bought with a price, and they cannot help desiring to glorify Him with their bodies and spirits—who loved them and gave Himself for them. They thirst after holiness because their Father loves holiness; they thirst after purity because their Master loves purity; they strive to be like Jesus because they hope to be one day forever with Him.

But seeing they have many a difficulty in doing the things that they desire, and are continually warring with the world, the flesh, and the devil, and sometimes are so ready to faint that they doubt whether they really are of Christ's family or not—seeing these things are so, I have tried to give you a faint outline of their experience on recent occasions, and I purpose this afternoon to lay before you, the advice which the apostle gives them in my text.

Now, I say that the text contains five points

I. We have all a race to run.

II. Many have gone before us.

III. We must lay aside every weight.

IV. We must run with patience.

V. We must be continually looking unto Jesus.

The Lord pour down His Spirit upon each of you, and bow the hearts of all here present, as the heart of one man, that you may seek the Lord while there is yet time, and set your faces towards Jerusalem, and not die the death of the faithless and unbelieving.

I. We have all a race to run. By this you are not to understand that our own arm and our own strength can ever open for us the gates of everlasting life, and win us a place in heaven. Far from it: that is all of grace—it is another question. It simply means that all who take up the cross and follow Christ must make up their minds to meet with many a difficulty, they must calculate on labor and toil and trouble, they have a mighty work to do, and there is need for all their attention and energy. Without there will be fightings, within there will be fears; there will be snares to be avoided, and temptations to be resisted; there will be your own treacherous hearts, often cold and dead and dry and dull; there will be friends who will give you unscriptural advice, and relations who will even war against your soul. In short, there will be stumbling-blocks on every side, there will be occasion for all your diligence and watchfulness and godly jealousy and prayer—you will soon find that to be a real Christian is no light matter.

Oh what a condemnation there is here for all those easy-going people who seem to think they may pass their time as they please, and yet be numbered with the saints in glory everlasting! Are those who show less earnestness about their souls than about their earthly amusements, and those who have much to tell you about this world's business but nothing about heaven, and those who think nothing of neglecting the commonest helps towards Zion, and count it much to give religion a few Sunday thoughts—are these men running the Christian race, and straining every nerve after the prize? I leave the answer with yourselves: judge what I say!

And those who profess to have entered the course, and yet find time to rest by the wayside and trifle with temptation, and find fault with the anxiety of others—and those who stop to take breath and boast of their attainments, and look behind them—are such running the race set before them as if it was a matter of life and death? Oh no! They may get the name of Christians—but they are not so running that they shall obtain.

But those who are taught and called of God may soon be distinguished from the sleeping children of this world. These have no leisure for vain amusements; their eyes are fixed and their thoughts are engaged upon the narrow path they have to tread, and the crown they hope to receive. They have counted the cost, and come out from the world; and their only wish is that they may finish their course with joy.

II. The second thing you may learn from the text is this: **Many have gone before us.** "We are encompassed with a great cloud of *witnesses."* The witnesses here spoken of are those patriarchs and prophets who are mentioned in the eleventh chapter, and the apostle calls upon us to remember them and their troubles and take courage. Are we frail earthen vessels? so were they. Are we weak and encompassed with infirmities? so were they. Are we exposed to temptation and burdened with this body of corruption? so were they. Are we afflicted? so were they. Are we alone in our generation, the scorn of all our neighbors? so were they. Have we trials of cruel mockings? so had they. What can we possibly be called upon to suffer which they have not endured? What consolations did they receive which we may not enjoy?

You may talk of your cares and business and families—but their portion was just like yours; they were men of like passions; they did not neglect business, and yet they gave their hearts to God. They show the race can always be run by those who have the will. Yes, they were all flesh and blood like ourselves, and yet by grace they became new creatures; and so by faith they "obtained a good report;" by faith they confessed themselves strangers and pilgrims on the earth; through faith they "quenched the raging of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, gained strength after being weak, became mighty in battle, and put foreign armies to flight. Some men were tortured, not accepting release, so that they might gain a better resurrection, and others experienced mockings and scourgings,

as well as bonds and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawed in two, they died by the sword, they wandered about in sheepskins, in goatskins, destitute, afflicted, and mistreated. They wandered in deserts, mountains, caves, and holes in the ground."

But grace exceedingly abounded, and all fought a good fight and finished their course and kept the faith, and to God Almighty every one of them appeared in Zion. Take courage, fainting Christians: you are encompassed with a great cloud of witnesses! The race that you are running has been run by millions before; you think that no one ever had such trials as yourself—but every step that you are journeying has been safely trod by others; the valley of the shadow of death has been securely passed by a multitude of trembling, doubting ones like yourself. They had their fears and anxieties, like you—but they were not cast away. The world, the flesh and the devil can never overwhelm the weakest woman who will set her face towards God. These millions journeyed on in bitterness and tears like your own, and yet not one perished—they all reached their eternal home.

III. The third point to be considered is the apostle's advice, to "lay aside every weight." By this he means that **we must give up everything which is *really hurtful to our souls***. We must act like men who throw off all their long and flowing garments, as an encumbrance, when about to enter a race. We must cast away everything which hinders us upon our road towards heaven—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life; the love of riches, pleasures, and honors, the spirit of lukewarmness and carelessness and indifference about the things of God—all must be rooted out and forsaken if we are anxious for the prize. We must mortify the deeds of the body, we must crucify our affections for this world. We must look well to our habits and inclinations and employments, and if we find anything coming in as a stumbling-block between ourselves and salvation, we must be ready to lay it aside as if it were a millstone about our necks, although it cost us as much pain as cutting off a hand or plucking out a right eye. Away with everything which keeps us back; our feet are slow at the very best, we have a long course to run, we cannot afford to carry weight, if we are really contending for everlasting life.

But above all we must take heed that we lay aside the sin which does most easily beset us, the sin which from our age—or habit—or taste—or disposition—or feelings, possesses the greatest power over us. I know of two which are always at our elbows, two sins which try the most advanced Christians even to the end, and these are pride and unbelief. **Pride** in our own difference from others, pride in our reputation as Christians, pride in our spiritual attainments. **Unbelief** about our own sinfulness, unbelief about God's wisdom, unbelief about God's mercy. Oh, they are heavy burdens, and sorely do they keep us back, and few really know they are carrying them, and few indeed are those who will not discover them at the very bottom of the chamber of their hearts, waiting an opportunity to come out.

But there are particular besetting sins, of which each separate Christian can alone furnish an account; each single one of us has some weak point, each one has got a thin, weak spot in his wall of defense against the devil, each one has a traitor in his camp ready to open the gates to Satan, and he who is wise will never rest until he has discovered where this weak point is. This is that special sin which you are here exhorted to watch against, to overcome, to cast forth, to spare no means in bringing it into subjection—that it may not entangle you in your race towards Zion. One man is beset with lust, another with a love of drinking, another with evil temper, another with malice, another with covetousness, another with worldly-mindedness, another with idleness—but each of us has got about him some besetting infirmity, which is able to hinder him far more than others, and with which he must keep an unceasing warfare—or else he will never so run as to obtain the prize.

Oh these bitter besetting sins! How many have fallen in their full course, and given occasion to God's enemies to blaspheme, from thinking lightly of them, from not continually guarding against them, from a vain notion that they were altogether cut off! They have been over-confident and presumptuous. They have said "We are the temple of the Lord, and we cannot greatly stumble," and they have forgotten that hidden root, that branch of the old Adam; and so day after day, little by little, shoot after shoot, it grew, it strengthened, it filled their heart, it blighted their few graces; and suddenly, without time to think, they have slipped and fallen headlong in the race, and now they are hurrying down stream amidst that miserable party, the backsliders, and who can tell what their end may be?

But what was the simple cause? They disregarded some besetting sin. Go, child of God, and search the chambers of your heart! See whether you can find there some seed of evil, some darling thing which you have tenderly spared hitherto, because it was a little one. Away with it! There must be no mercy, no compromise, no reserve! It must be laid aside, plucked up, torn up by the roots—or it will one day trip you up, and prevent you running your race towards Zion. The gates of heaven are broad enough to receive the worst of sinners—but too narrow to admit the smallest grain of unforsaken sin!

IV. The fourth point to be noticed in the text is **the frame of mind in which we are to run**: "let us run with *patience."* I take this patience to mean that meek, contented spirit, which is the child of real living faith, which flows from a confidence that all things are working together for our good. Oh, it is a most necessary and useful grace! There are so many crosses to be borne when we have entered the course, so many disappointments and trials and fatigues, that, except we are enabled to possess our souls in patience, we shall never persevere unto the end. But we must not turn back to Egypt, because some bring up an evil report of the promised land; we must not faint because the journey is long and the way lies through a wilderness, we must press forward without flagging, not murmuring when we are chastened—but saying, with Eli, "It is the Lord: let Him do that which seems good to Him."

Look at **Moses**, in Hebrews 11: "When he was come to years, he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward; he endured as seeing Him who is invisible."

Look at **Job**, when God permitted Satan to afflict him: "Naked," he says, "I came out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there: the Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." "What? shall we receive good from the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?"

Look at **David**, the man after God's own heart. How many waves of trouble passed over that honored head; how many years he fled from the hand of Saul, how much tribulation did he suffer from his own family; and hear what he says when he is fleeing from his own son Absalom, and a certain Benjamite came forth and cursed him. "Behold, my son seeks my life: how much more may this Benjamite do it? Let him alone, and let him curse; for the Lord has bidden him. It may be that the Lord will look on my affliction, and that the Lord will requite me good for his cursing this day." Mark too, as you read his Psalms, how often you come on that expression,

"waiting upon God": it seems as if he thought it the highest grace a Christian can attain to.

Look lastly at your blessed **Lord** Himself. Peter says, "He left us an example, that we should walk in His steps: who did no sin, neither was deceit found in His mouth: who when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not—but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously." Paul says: "For consider Him who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest you be wearied and faint in your minds. You have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin. And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks unto you as unto children—My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when you are rebuked of Him: for whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives."

O yes, beloved, we must run with patience—or we shall never obtain. There may be many things we cannot understand, much that the flesh could perhaps wish otherwise—but let us endure unto the end, and all shall be made clear, and God's arrangements shall be proved best. Think not to have your reward on earth, do not draw back because your good things are all yet to come. Today is the cross—but tomorrow is the crown. Today is the labor—but tomorrow is the wages. Today is the sowing—but tomorrow is the harvest. Today is the battle—but tomorrow is the rest. Today is the weeping—but tomorrow is the joy. And what is today compared to tomorrow? Today is but threescore years and ten—but tomorrow is eternity. Be patient and hope unto the end.

V. The last point is the most important in the text. It is **the object on which our eyes are to be fixed**. We are to run our race *"looking unto Jesus."* We are to run, depending on Him for salvation, renouncing all trust in our own poor frail exertions, and counting our own performances no better than filthy rags, and resting wholly and entirely, simply and completely, upon that perfect righteousness which He worked out for us upon the cross. We need not run uncertain of the end, we need not fight in ignorance of what shall follow. We have only to behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, and believe that He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows, and will soon present us spotless and unblameable in His Father's sight.

And then we are to run, making Jesus our Example, taking no lower pattern than the Son of God Himself, endeavoring to copy His meekness, His humility, His love, His zeal for souls, His self-denial, His purity, His faith, His patience, His prayerfulness. And as we look—we shall daily become more like Him!

And then we are to run, looking for our blessed Lord's appearing, praying always with all prayer and supplication that He will hasten His coming and kingdom and accomplish the number of His elect. Unto those who look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation; and their vile bodies in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, shall be made like unto His glorious body, and they shall be forever with their Lord!

Oh, this looking unto Jesus! here is the secret cause which kept that cloud of witnesses steadfast and unmoveable in this narrow way! Here is the simple rule for all who wish to enter on the course which lands a man in Paradise! Look not to earth: it is a sinful, perishable place, and they who build upon it shall find their foundation of the earth earthy; they will not stand the fire. Set not your affections upon it—or else you will perish together; the earth shall be burned up, and if you cling to it, in death you shall not be divided!

Look not to yourselves! you are by nature wretched and miserable, and poor and blind and naked; you cannot make atonement for your past transgressions, you cannot wipe out a single page in that long black list. And when the King shall ask you for your wedding garment you will be speechless. Look simply unto Jesus, and then the weight shall fall from off your shoulders, and the course shall be clear and plain, and you shall run the race which is set before you. Truly a man may be mistaken for a season, and walk in darkness for a time—but if he once determines to look to Jesus, he shall not greatly err.

Who now are the men and women in this congregation who have not entered on the grand struggle for life? This day, you Christless, sleeping ones, this day I charge you to be honest and merciful to your souls. Turn! O turn you from your evil ways! Turn from your self-pleasing and self-indulging; seek you the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near; cry mightily unto the Lord Jesus Christ, before the night comes and you sleep for evermore. I know the thoughts that are in the hearts of those among you who ever think, (for many come and go without thinking): I know your thoughts; you cannot make up your mind to lay aside every weight, you cannot throw overboard the sin that does so easily beset you. Alas! like Herod you would do many things—but not all: you will not give up that Herodias. That darling bosom-sin—the world, the business, the drink, the pleasure—you cannot give it up, it must have the first place in your heart. I testify, I warn you, I take you to record, that God has declared there shall never enter into heaven anything that defiles. And if you are determined not to give up your sins, your sins will cleave to you like lead and sink you in the pit of destruction. You need not wait: you must show some inclination; God will not convert you against your will; except you show the desire, how can you expect He will give you the grace?

But where are the men and women who are running the race and struggling towards the heavenly Jerusalem? Think not that you have anything which makes your journey more difficult than others. The saints at God's right hand were perfected through sufferings; and you must run with patience. Millions have gone safely through, and so shall you.

Beware of cumbering yourselves with any weight of earthly cares. Examine your hearts most closely, and purge out each besetting sin with a godly prayerful jealousy. Remember that blessed rule, "looking unto Jesus." Peter did run well for a time, when he left the ship to walk upon the sea to Jesus—but when he saw the waves and the storm he was afraid and began to sink. Thus many a one sets out courageously—but after a while corruptions rise high within, corruptions are strong without, the eye is drawn off Jesus, the devil gets an advantage—and the soul begins to sink. Oh, keep your eye steadily fixed on Christ, and you shall go through fire and water and they shall not hurt you.

Are you tempted? look unto Jesus. Are you afflicted? look unto Jesus. Do all speak evil of you? look unto Jesus. Do you feel cold, dull, backsliding? look unto Jesus. Never say, "I will heal myself and then look unto Jesus, I will get into a good frame and then take comfort in my Beloved." This is the delusion of Satan. But whether you are weak or strong, in the valley or on the mount, in sickness or in health, in sorrow or in joy, in going out or in coming in, in youth or in age, in richness or in poverty, in life or in death—let this be your motto and your guide, "LOOKING UNTO JESUS!"

What do You Think About Christ?

by J. C. Ryle

"What do you think about Christ?" (Matthew 22:42)

Beloved, I have told you more than once, and I tell you now again, that since I have had the charge of this district it has been my heart's desire and prayer to promote your salvation. Morning and night I make my petition to my Father who is in heaven, that it will please Him to pour out the Holy Spirit upon you all, and bring you unto Christ. Has not He said "Ask, and you shall receive"—and shall I not bring your case before Him?

But you little know what an anxious situation a minister of the Church is placed in at all times, and never more so than when preparing for the pulpit. Perhaps you may think I have nothing to do but open my Bible, take the first text that meets my eye, and write off a sermon in two or three hours. But it is far otherwise. I have to watch for your souls, as one who would give account. And if you will not think about them yourselves, I must try to persuade you. Now, I search the Scriptures and compare them with what I see and observe and hear of those who live about me; and I declare to you, with grief and sorrow, in many many cases I cannot make the two agree. I find there are some people ruining body and soul by drunkenness and immorality; some who only come to church once, and that without any conceivable reason that I can discover; others who do so very irregularly, and on some Sundays do not come at all. Oh, beloved, I tell you again, as I have told many from house to house, if it is worth while to come at all, it is worth while to come regularly. One person told me the other day he never went anywhere, either to church or chapel, he had given it up; and I fear there are others like him. Believe me, when I see all this, it becomes a very difficult matter to make up my mind what texts will do you the most good.

What, I say to myself, will most awaken this people? What will most startle them? What will arouse them and make them think? What will most likely lead them to see the sinfulness of sin, the danger of trifling with their Maker and their judge, the real value of their own souls, the exceeding mercy of God in Christ Jesus? Such were some of the reflections that passed through my mind when I chose the text you have heard: "What do you think about Christ?"

Beloved, the present state of your souls depends on the nature of the answer your conscience gives: "What do you think about Christ?" You cannot answer this satisfactorily unless you are true members of His body—really united to Him by a living faith, really renewed by the Holy Spirit. There is no middle path here. You cannot make it a matter of indifference whether you think rightly of Christ or not. The question is very short, very simple—but the answer to it involves life or death. The book of Judges tells us that the Gileadites slew forty-two thousand men of Ephraim, because they could not pronounce a word aright—but the pronunciation of that single word was the proof whether they were enemies or not. And just so stands the case between you and God in the matter of my text. I ask you a little, plain question—but if you cannot give the answer God requires, I warn you, in love and tenderness, you are traveling on the broad way that leads to destruction!

There are some, I know, who believe that to think and preach so much about Christ is not true religion; that it would be better if I spoke more about plain practical duties, that it does not signify so much what men think about Christ. But I trust they are so few, that I shall say nothing to them. Plain practical duties are very well—but they cannot put away sin—or give men new hearts—or save souls. All that is Christ's office; Christ is the mainspring and subject of all Scripture; Christ, we read, is the Bishop of souls, the Author and Finisher of faith, the Bread of life, the Captain of salvation, the Cornerstone, the Door, the Mediator, the Prince of life, the Prince of peace, the Rock, the Shepherd, the Sun of righteousness, the Light of the world. And surely, then, I may fairly tell you that to think rightly of Jesus Christ is the sum and substance of religion.

I. Let us then inquire, beloved, **what it is to think rightly of Christ.**

1. First, then, with respect to ***His Person***, we must think that He is perfect God, equal with the Father, and together with Him and the Holy Spirit, making up the ever-blessed Trinity. If we do not think this we contradict the words of Scripture. If we do not think of Christ as God, we cannot explain how He can be so mighty to save—or why His fulfilment of the law and crucifixion can have been so meritorious, so complete a sacrifice for sins in the sight of His Father. If Christ had been at all inferior to God, the work that He worked upon earth for our sakes would have been the act of a servant, performing the commands of his master and doing no more than his duty. Nothing less than God could have made atonement for this guilty world.

2. We must think of Him as ***perfect man***, of like nature with ourselves in everything, sin only excepted. If Christ had not been man He could not have suffered the punishment of our iniquities by dying on the cross; if He had not taken on Him a body and a nature liable to temptation like our own, He could never have fulfilled the law for us and in our stead; and we could not have looked upon Him with a brotherly confidence, as one who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities.

3. We must think of Him as the great ***Redeemer*** and ***Savior***, who by the voluntary sacrifice and death of Himself made atonement for the sins of the whole world, provided a means of reconciliation between His Father and mankind, and brought in an everlasting righteousness which is unto all and upon all those who believe.

4. We must think of Him as a ***King***. He is the great head of a spiritual dominion over the heart of all whom He chooses and calls out of the world; the chief of a spiritual kingdom which confers peculiar blessings and privileges on all who become subjects of it—a kingdom which is unseen, invisible at present—but shall be known and acknowledged by all at Christ's second coming.

5. We must think of Him as the ***great High Priest***, who, like the Jewish high priest of old, has gone alone before us into the Holy of Holies, that is Heaven, to make satisfaction for the sin of His people with blood, even the blood of Himself, who ever stands at the right hand of God to make intercession for them; and can always feel for and pity them, because as man He was tempted like as they are.

6. We must think of Him as the ***Prophet*** who would come, foretold by Moses shortly before his death, who has shown to mankind the way of salvation, who has clearly explained how God's mercy and God's justice can be reconciled when sinners are accounted

righteous, who has taught us how God would have men to live, and has placed duties and morality upon their right foundation, and these are the inward motives and the heart.

7. Lastly, we must think of Him as the great ***Example***, who has left men a pattern that they should walk in His steps, who has given them, in His own person and behavior, a model of conduct in nearly every department of life which they cannot strive too much to imitate.

Now, I doubt not the greater part of you will feel disposed to say, "Do we not certainly know all these things? We have learned them long ago; we have heard them continually in church; if this is all you mean by thinking rightly of Christ, none may feel more comfortable than we do in answering the question of your text."

Yes, beloved—but this is not all. This is the point at which so many members of the Church of England stop short; here lies the snare into which so many of you fall; hitherto the devil himself will accompany you, and perhaps go further, for he believes, he trembles, he confesses Jesus to be the Holy One of God. Hearken, therefore, I beseech you, and understand that there are two ways of thinking about Christ; both indeed are necessary to salvation—but one, alas, is very often found to exist without the other. It is one thing to think of Him with the head, and another to think of Him with the heart; it is one to think about His offices as a matter of opinion, it is another to rejoice in them as infinitely important to your own soul; it is one to know these things correctly, it is another to live as if you felt them; it is one to acknowledge that Christ is a mighty gift to ruined man, it is quite another to apply this healing medicine to your own case.

Indeed I would not have you ignorant that this error is a most poisonous one, it is the very seat of Satan; and in charity to your souls I beseech you, if you love life, to take heed to your ways, to search your hearts, and come out from it. The Church of England has many privileges and advantages—there is no communion on earth which has so many to offer—but, like every other Church, she is liable to be abused by her unworthy members. She has placed in your hands a Prayer-book of unequaled beauty, propriety and spirituality—but many of you turn it to a bad account, and because you join in prayers which speak of Christ as *our* Redeemer, *our* Mediator, *our* Advocate—you flatter yourselves that you are in a fair way to be saved, that you are accepted in the Beloved. But know—each one, for a certainty, however suitable these prayers may be to those who can say Amen in faith, they will be found to have profited you very little if your conscience cannot also say, "He is *my* Redeemer, *my* Mediator, *my* Advocate."

To attend the services of this house is indeed a privilege, and one too that may not be lightly disregarded—but it is very possible to draw near with the lips and not with the heart, there is such a thing as the form of godliness without the power, and all the Prayer-books in England will never save your soul if you will not give your whole heart to God. Be not deceived: I want each one of you to make his salvation his own personal concern, and for a time to forget there is any but himself in the world to be saved—to ask his conscience "What do *I* think of Christ?" not What do *we* think? "Is Jesus *my* Savior?" not Is He *our* Savior—for men will not be judged in congregations—but separately, each standing by himself, and each in succession will be condemned who cannot say "The life that I have lived I have lived by the faith of the Son of God, who loved *me* and gave Himself for *me."*

Beloved, this doctrine may seem to make the way to heaven narrow—but did not Jesus say it was so, and would not your profession be all useless, all unmeaning, without it?

You say you think that Christ is **perfect God**? But how can His ministers suppose you really feel and believe this, when they see you show so little concern to worship Him, to give Him thanks, to put your whole trust in Him, to cast all your burden on Him, to fear Him, and to love Him—while you appear to meditate so seldom on the mighty work He alone could perform for you, on the righteousness He alone could bring—while you do not obey His expressed will—while He says one thing and you do another? Surely, when these things are so, He cannot be *your* God.

You say you think that Christ is a great **Redeemer**. But how can we suppose you feel this, while you appear so careless about the souls which He purchased with His own blood—while you think so lightly of the sins, which could only be atoned for by His death and sufferings upon the cross—while you show so little humiliation, so little sense of your own unworthiness and desperate state without Him—while you do not use every means of strengthening and refreshing your weak spirits, that you may be fit for the inheritance of His saints in light—while you live so much for this perishable world, from the snares of which He died to deliver you? Surely, whatever you may choose to think, when these things are so, He cannot be your Redeemer.

You say you think that Christ is a great **Example**. But how can we imagine you believe it, while you do not frame your own lives according to the pattern He has left—while you evidently do not struggle to imitate His faith, His love, His humility, His purity, His self-denial, His meekness, His gentleness, His unwearied zeal for the good of souls? Surely, whatever you may think and say, He cannot be your Example.

O beloved, this cold, lifeless acknowledgment, this dead belief of truths because you know nothing to the contrary, can never be thinking rightly of Christ! This cannot be that saving faith which works by love, overcomes the world, and purifies the heart. If this is all, you cannot be aware of your own sinfulness, you cannot be aware of the mighty remedy required; you must be dead alike to your own necessities, and the mercy of God who has provided so great salvation. If the plague or the typhus fever were in this church, and there stood among you some sure and healing medicine, and none of you did more than look at it, and say you believed it was an infallible cure—but none stretched out a hand to lay hold upon it and use it, could any one suppose that you either believed the remedy to be certain—or the disease to be a dangerous one? But just such is your case, if you profess to believe in Christ and yet cannot call Him your own; for you may depend upon it, that as far as *your* salvation is concerned, 'Christ unapplied' is no Christ at all.

I am at a loss whether it would be more fitting to call such thinking of your great Redeemer ungrateful or unreasonable. Judge now for yourselves. If an inhabitant of another world were to be told there was a certain place called earth, where God once placed a man and woman, gave them everything they could desire, and made them rulers over all, he would probably say: "What goodness! how great must have been their love! What pleasure they must have felt in doing His will!" Suppose then I went on to tell him this man and woman would not believe God's word, they thought themselves wiser than their Maker, and broke the only small command imposed upon them, he would say, perhaps, "What astonishing ingratitude, folly and unbelief! doubtless they were punished deservedly!" Suppose then I proceeded to tell him that, on the contrary, God spared them, provided means of reconciliation, and in

due time made manifest His mercy by sending His only-begotten Son to take guilty man's nature, fulfill the law and suffer punishment in his stead—declaring that whoever confessed his sins and put all his trust in this Almighty Savior would be saved from wrath and accounted as righteous as if he had never broken the law—do you not think that, on hearing this, he would say, "Wonderful! of course there must be very few who do not seek this Savior, make Him the chief subject of their thoughts and object of their love, the resting-place of their hope, their refuge in trial, the rock of their salvation; there must be few who do not delight to hear of Him, read about Him, talk of Him, meditate upon Him, pray to Him, honor His word, His house and His services." Beloved, what could I say next? I have stated the case fairly so far, and would not this be my only honest reply? "Many, alas, are called—but few are chosen. Many name the name of Christ—but few depart from iniquity or believe in Him to the saving of their souls."

Allow me once more to plead with you for your eternal good. Do not, I entreat you, leave this place in a state of lukewarm uncertainty as to whether you think rightly of Christ or not. **If the thought of Jesus dying for sin has never weaned you from the world, made a difference in your lives, and sanctified your hearts—it has hitherto profited you nothing.** If the thought of Jesus dying for sin has not shown you how sinful sin is, how hateful it is in the sight of God, has never brought you on your knees grieving for your iniquity with heartfelt repentance, has never led you to that Bible which testifies of Him—believe me it has hitherto profited you nothing, it will only increase your condemnation.

Remember, however lightly you may esteem your souls, God has set an untold value on them, for He gave His only Son for their redemption—but they cannot be saved, unless Christ dwells in your heart by faith. Awake, then, and cast away this icy garment of indifference, which is now your pride. Dare to go further than the world around you, and to think of Christ as a true Christian, as one who has sins to be atoned for, and rejoices to find a complete atonement.

I solemnly declare unto you, if you are content with a mere head-knowledge of these things and can be at ease without coming unto Jesus as your Savior and your God—you are ruining your own souls, and you shall find that Sodom and Gomorrah will rise up in judgment against you and condemn you, for if they had known these thigs, they would have repented long ago in dust and ashes.

Come, then, unto Jesus; think that He is ready to receive you, willing and mighty to save. You cannot say I wish you to do what is impossible; you cannot say I tell you to fulfill the law and then come; I do not ask you to make brick without straw, to make yourselves godly and then come. In my Master's name I offer you complete salvation if you will believe, free salvation if you will believe; everlasting life if you will believe. All things are yours if you will think rightly of Christ.

Christians, one word for you. What do you think about Christ? Do you regret that you have made Him your Redeemer and your Friend? Is His service wearisome? Is not your blessed Lord as good as His word, "I will give you rest"? Are not His ways, ways of pleasantness and paths of peace? Can you not say of Him what was said of Solomon by the Queen of Sheba: "The report was true that I heard in my own land of your words and of your wisdom—but I did not believe the reports until I came and my own eyes had seen it. And behold, the half was not told me. Your wisdom and prosperity surpass the report that I heard. Happy are your men! Happy are your servants, who continually stand before you and hear your wisdom!" (1 Kings 10:6-8)

Press forward, then, I beseech you, toward the mark for the prize of your high calling. Show forth the praises of Him who has called you out of darkness into this marvelous light. Let nothing tempt you to cast aside your confidence, which has great hope of reward. "Do not be weary in well doing, for in due time you shall reap, if you faint not."

The Fallibility of Ministers

by J. C. Ryle

"When Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he was clearly in the wrong. Before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group. The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray. When I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter in front of them all, "You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs?" We who are Jews by birth and not 'Gentile sinners' know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified." Galatians 2:11-16

Have we ever considered what the Apostle *Peter* did at Antioch? It is a question that deserves serious consideration.

What the Apostle Peter did at *Rome* we are often told, although we have hardly a jot of authentic information about it. Legends, traditions, and fables abound on the subject. But unhappily for these writers, Scripture is utterly silent upon the point. There is nothing in Scripture to show that the Apostle Peter *ever* was at Rome at all!

But what did the Apostle Peter do at Antioch? This is the point to which I want to direct attention. This is the subject from the passage from the Epistle to the Galatians, which heads this paper. On this point, at any rate, the Scripture speaks clearly and unmistakably.

The six verses of the passage before us are striking on many accounts. They are striking, if we consider the *event* which they describe: here is one Apostle rebuking another! They are striking, when we consider who the two men are: Paul, the younger, rebukes Peter the elder! They are striking, when we remark the occasion: this was no glaring fault, no flagrant sin, at first sight, that Peter had committed! Yet the Apostle Paul says, "I opposed him to his face, because he was clearly in the wrong." He does more than this—he reproves Peter publicly for his error before all the Church at Antioch. He goes even further—he writes an *account* of the matter, which is now read in two hundred languages all over the world!

It is my firm conviction that the Holy Spirit wants us to take particular notice of this passage of Scripture. If Christianity had been an

invention of man, these things would never have been recorded. An *impostor* would have hushed up the difference between two Apostles. The Spirit of truth has caused these verses to be written for our learning, and we shall do well to take heed to their contents.

There are three great lessons from Antioch, which I think we ought to learn from this passage.

I. The first lesson is, "That great ministers may make great mistakes."

II. The second is, "That to keep the *truth* of Christ in His Church is even more important than to keep *peace*."

III. The third is, "That there is no doctrine about which we ought to be so protective about, as *justification by faith* without the deeds of the law."

I. The first great lesson we learn from Antioch is, "That great ministers may make great mistakes." What clearer proof can we have, than that which is set before us in this place? Peter, without doubt, was one of the greatest in the company of the Apostles. He was an old disciple. He was a disciple who had had peculiar advantages and privileges. He had been a constant companion of the Lord Jesus. He had heard the Lord preach, seen the Lord work miracles, enjoyed the benefit of the Lord's private teaching, been numbered among the Lord's intimate friends, and gone out and come in with Him all the time He ministered upon earth. He was the Apostle to whom the *keys of the kingdom* of heaven were given, and by whose hand those keys were first used. He was the first who opened the door of faith to the *Jews*, by preaching to them on the day of Pentecost. He was the first who opened the door of faith to the *Gentiles*, by going to the house of Cornelius, and receiving him into the Church. He was the first to rise up in the Council of the fifteenth of Acts, and say, "Why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of the disciples a yoke that neither we nor our fathers have been able to bear?" And yet here this very Peter, this same Apostle, plainly falls into a great mistake!

The Apostle Paul tells us, "I opposed him to his face." He tells us "because he was clearly in the wrong." He says "he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group." He says of him and his companions, that "they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel." He speaks of their "hypocrisy." He tells us that by this hypocrisy even Barnabas, his old companion in missionary labors, "was led astray." What a striking fact this is. This is Simon Peter! This is the third great error of his, which the Holy Spirit has thought fit to record! Once we find him trying to keep back our Lord, as far as he could, from the great work of the cross, and severely rebuked Him. Then we find him denying the Lord three times—and with an oath! Here again we find him endangering the leading truth of Christ's Gospel. Surely we may say, "Lord, what is man!" Let us note, that of all the Apostles there is not one, excepting, of course, Judas Iscariot, of whom we have so many proofs that he was a fallible man.

(Note: It is curious to observe the shifts to which some writers have been reduced, in order to explain away the plain meaning of the verses which head this paper. Some have maintained that Paul did not really rebuke Peter, but only faked it, for show and appearance sake! Others have maintained that it was not Peter the Apostle who was rebuked, but another Peter—one of the seventy! Such interpretations need no remark. They are simply absurd. The truth is that the plain honest meaning of the verses strikes a heavy blow at the favorite Roman Catholic doctrine of the *primacy* and *superiority* of Peter over the rest of the Apostles.)

But it is all meant to teach us that even the Apostles themselves, when not writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, were at times *liable to err*. It is meant to teach us that the best men are weak and fallible, so long as they are in the body. Unless the grace of God holds them up, any one of them may go astray at any time. It is very humbling, but it is very true. True Christians are converted, justified, and sanctified. They are living members of Christ, beloved children of God, and heirs of eternal life. They are elect, chosen, called, and kept unto salvation. They have the Spirit. But they are *not infallible!*

Will not ecclesiastical rank and dignity confer infallibility? No—they will not! It matters nothing what a man is called. He may be a Preacher, Minister, or Deacon. He is still a fallible man! Neither the education, nor the anointing oil, nor the laying on of hands, can prevent a man making mistakes.

Will not *numbers* confer infallibility? No—they will not! You may gather together princes by the score, and ministers by the hundred; but, when gathered together, they are still liable to err. You may call them a council, or an assembly, or a conference, or whatever you please. It matters nothing. Their conclusions are still the conclusions of fallible men. Their collective wisdom is still capable of making enormous mistakes.

The example of the Apostle Peter at Antioch is one that does not stand alone. It is only a parallel of many a case that we find written for our learning, in Holy Scripture. Do we not remember *Abraham*, the father of the faithful, following the advice of Sarah, and taking Hagar for a wife? Do we not remember *Aaron*, the first high priest, listening to the *children* of Israel, and making a golden calf? Do we not remember Solomon, the wisest of men, allowing his wives to build their high places of false worship? Do we not remember *Jehosaphat*, the good king, going down to help wicked Ahab? Do we not remember *Hezekiah*, the good king, receiving the ambassadors of Babylon? Do we not remember *Josiah*, the last of Judah's good kings, going forth to fight with Pharaoh? Do we not remember *James* and *John*, wanting fire to come down from heaven? These things deserve to be remembered. They were not written without cause. They cry aloud, "No infallibility!"

And who does not see, when he reads the history of the Church of Christ, repeated proofs that the best of men can err? The *early fathers* were zealous according to their knowledge, and ready to die for Christ. But many of them advocated ritualism, and nearly all sowed the seeds of many superstitions. The *Reformers* were honored instruments in the hand of God for reviving the cause of truth on earth. Yet hardly one of them can be named who did not make some great mistake. *Luther* held tightly to the doctrine of consubstantiation. *Melancthon* was often timid and undecided. *Calvin* permitted Servetus to be burned. *Cranmer* recanted and fell away for a time from his first faith. *Jewell* subscribed to Roman Catholic Church doctrines for fear of death. *Hooper* disturbed the Church of England by demanding the need to wear *ceremonial vestments* when ministering. The *Puritans*, in later times, denounced Christian liberty and freedoms as doctrines from the pit of Hell. *Wesley* and *Toplady*, last century, abused each other in most shameful language. *Irving*, in our own day, gave way to the delusion of speaking in unknown tongues.

All these things speak with a loud voice. They all lift up a beacon to the Church of Christ. They all say, "Do not trust man; call no man *master*; call no man *father* on earth; let no man glory in man. "He who glories, let him glory in the Lord." They all cry—"No infallibility!" The lesson is one that we all need. We are all naturally inclined to *lean upon man* whom we can see, rather than upon

God whom we cannot see. We naturally love to lean upon the *ministers* of the visible Church, rather than upon the Lord Jesus Christ, the great Shepherd and High Priest, who is invisible. We need to be continually warned and set on our guard.

I see this tendency to lean on man everywhere. I know no branch of the Protestant Church of Christ which does not require to be cautioned upon the point. It is a snare to the Scottish Christians to pin their faith on John Knox. It is a snare to the Methodists in our day to worship the memory of John Wesley. All these are snares, and into these snares how many fall!

We all naturally love to have a *pope* of our own. We are far too ready to think, that because some great minister or some learned man says a thing, or because our own minister, whom we love, says a thing—that it must be right, without examining whether it is in Scripture or not. Most men dislike the trouble of thinking for themselves. They like following a leader. They are like sheep, when one goes over the hill all the rest follow. Here at Antioch even Barnabas was carried away. We can well fancy that good man saying, "An old Apostle, like Peter, surely cannot be wrong. Following him, I cannot err."

And now let us see what **PRACTICAL LESSONS** we may learn from this part of our subject.

(a) For one thing, let us learn not to put implicit confidence in any man's opinion, merely because he lived many hundred years ago. "When Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he was clearly in the wrong." Galatians 2:11. Peter was a man who lived in the time of Christ Himself, and yet he could err. There are many who talk much in the present day about the voice of the early Church. They would have us believe that those who lived nearest the time of the Apostles, must of course know more about truth than we can. There is no foundation for any such opinion. It is a fact, that the most ancient writers in the true Church of Christ are often at variance with one another. It is a fact that they often changed their own minds, and retracted their own former opinions. It is a fact that they often wrote foolish and weak things, and often showed great ignorance in their explanations of Scripture. It is vain to expect to find them free from mistakes. Infallibility is not to be found in the early fathers—but in the Bible alone!

(b) For another thing, let us learn not to put implicit confidence in any man's opinion, merely because of his office as a minister. Peter was one of the very chief Apostles—and yet he could err. This is a point on which men have continually gone astray. It is the rock on which the early Church struck. Men soon took up the saying, "Do nothing contrary to the mind of the minister!" But what are ministers, preachers, and deacons? What are the best of ministers but men—dust, ashes, and clay—men of like passions with ourselves, men exposed to temptations, men liable to weaknesses and infirmities? What does the Scripture say? "What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task" (1 Corinthians 3:5).

Ministers have often driven the truth into the wilderness, and decreed that to be true, which was false. The greatest errors have been begun by ministers! Hophni and Phinehas, the sons of the high-priest, made religion to be abhorred by the children of Israel. Annas and Caiaphas, though in the direct line of descent from Aaron, crucified the Lord. It is absurd to suppose that ordained men cannot go wrong. We should follow them so far as they teach according to the Bible, but no further. We should believe them so long as they can say, "Thus it is written, thus says the Lord," but further than this we are not to go. Infallibility is not to be found in ordained men, but in the Bible alone!

(c) For another thing, let us learn not to place implicit confidence in any man's opinion, merely because of his learning. Peter was a man who had miraculous gifts, and could speak with the (then valid) gift of tongues—and yet he could err!

This is a point again on which many go wrong. This is the rock on which men struck in the middle ages. Men looked on Thomas Aquinas, and Peter Lombard, and many of their companions, as almost inspired. They gave epithets to some of them in token of their admiration. They talked of "the indisputable" preacher, "the angelic" minister, "the incomparable" pastor, and seemed to think that *whatever these ministers said—must be true!* But what is the most learned of men, if he is not taught by the Holy Spirit? What is the most learned of all divines—but a mere fallible child of Adam at his very best? Vast knowledge of books—and great ignorance of God's truth—may go side by side! They have done so, they may do so, and they will do so in all times.

I do not doubt that the one volume of *Pilgrim's Progress*, written by a man who knew hardly any book but his Bible, and was ignorant of Greek and Latin, will prove in the last day to have done more for the benefit of the world, than all the works of the schoolmen put together. Learning is a gift that ought not to be despised. It is an evil day when books are not valued in the Church. But it is amazing to observe how vast a man's intellectual attainments may be—and yet how little he may know of the grace of God! I have no doubt the Authorities of Oxford in the last century, knew more of Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, than Wesley or Whitefield. But they knew little of the Gospel of Christ. Infallibility is not to be found among learned men—but in the Bible alone!

(d) For another thing, let us take care that we do not place implicit confidence on our own minister's opinion, however godly he may be. Peter was a man of mighty grace, and yet he could err. Your minister may be a man of God indeed, and worthy of all honor for his preaching and example; but do not make a *pope* of him! Do not place his word side by side with the Word of God. Do not spoil him by flattery. Do not let him suppose he can make no mistakes. Do not lean your whole weight on his opinion —or you may find to your cost that he can err. It is written of Joash, King of Judah, that he "did what was right in the eyes of the Lord all the years of Jehoiada the priest" (2 Chronicles 24:2). Jehoiada died, and then the religion of Joash died! Just so your minister may die, and then your religion may die too. He may change, and your religion may change. He may go away, and your religion may go. Oh, do not be satisfied with *a religion built on man!*

Do not be content with saying, "I have hope, because my own minister has told me such and such things." Seek to be able to say, "I have hope, because I find it thus and thus written in the Word of God." If your peace is to be solid, you must go yourself to the fountain of all truth. If your comforts are to be lasting, you must visit the well of life yourself, and draw fresh water for your own soul. Ministers may depart from the faith. The visible Church may be broken up. But he who has the Word of God written in his heart, has a foundation beneath his feet which will never fail him. Honor your minister as a faithful ambassador of Christ. Esteem him very highly in love for his work's sake. But never forget that infallibility is not to be found in godly ministers—but in the Bible alone!

The things I have mentioned are worth remembering. Let us bear them in mind, and we shall have learned one lesson from Antioch.

II. I now pass on to the second lesson that we learn from Antioch. That lesson is, "That to keep Gospel *truth* in the Church—is of even greater importance than to keep *peace*." I suppose no man knew better the value of peace and unity than the Apostle Paul. He was the Apostle who wrote to the Corinthians about love. He was the Apostle who said, "Live in harmony with one another; live in peace with each other; the Lord's servant must not quarrel; There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called—one Lord, one faith, one baptism." He was the Apostle who said, "I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some" (Romans 12:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:13; Philemon 3:16; Ephesians 4:5; 1 Corinthians 9:22).

Yet see how he acts here! He withstands Peter to the face. He publicly rebukes him. He runs the risk of all the consequences which might follow. He takes the chance of everything that might be said by the enemies of the Church at Antioch. Above all, he writes it down for a perpetual memorial, that it never might be forgotten, that, wherever the Gospel is preached throughout the world, this public rebuke of an erring Apostle might be known and read by all men.

Now, why did he do this? Because he dreaded false doctrine; because he knew that a little leaven leavens the whole lump, because he would teach us that we ought to contend for the truth jealously, and to fear the loss of *truth* more than the loss of *peace*.

Paul's example is one we shall do well to remember in the present day. Many people will put up with anything in religion, if they may only have a quiet life. They have a morbid dread of what they call "controversy." They are filled with a morbid fear of what they style, in a vague way, "party spirit," though they never define clearly what party spirit is. They are possessed with a morbid desire to keep peace, and make all things smooth and pleasant, even though it is at the expense of *truth*.

So long as they have outward calm, smoothness, stillness, and order, they seem content to give up everything else. I believe they would have thought with Ahab—that Elijah was a troubler of Israel; and would have helped the princes of Judah when they put Jeremiah in prison, to stop his mouth. I have no doubt that many of these men of whom I speak, would have thought that Paul at Antioch was a very imprudent man, and that he went too far! I believe this is all wrong.

We have no right to expect anything but the pure Gospel of Christ, unmixed and unadulterated; the same Gospel that was taught by the Apostles; to do good to the souls of men. I believe that to maintain this pure truth in the Church—men should be ready to make any sacrifice, to hazard peace, to risk dissension, and run the chance of division. They should no more tolerate false doctrine—than they would tolerate sin. They should withstand any adding to or taking away from the simple message of the Gospel of Christ.

For the truth's sake, our Lord Jesus Christ denounced the Pharisees, though they sat in Moses' seat, and were the appointed and authorized teachers of men. "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites!" He says, eight times over, in the twenty-third chapter of Matthew. And who shall dare to breathe a suspicion that our Lord was wrong? For the truth's sake, Paul withstood and blamed Peter, though a brother. What was the use of unity—when pure doctrine is gone? And who shall dare to say he was wrong? For the truth's sake, Athanasius stood out against the world to maintain the pure doctrine about the divinity of Christ, and waged a controversy with the great majority of the professing Church. And who shall dare to say he was wrong? For the truth's sake, Luther broke the unity of the Church in which he was born, denounced the Pope and all his ways, and laid the foundation of a new teaching. And who shall dare to say that Luther was wrong? For the truth's sake, Cranmer, Ridley, and Latimer, the English Reformers, counseled Henry VIII and Edward VI to separate from Rome, and to risk the consequences of division. And who shall dare to say that they were wrong? For the truth's sake, Whitefield and Wesley, a hundred years ago, denounced the mere barren moral preaching of the clergy of their day, and went out into the highways and byways to save souls, knowing well that they would be cast out from the Church's communion. And who shall dare to say that they were wrong?

Yes! peace without truth—is a false peace; it is the very peace of the devil. Unity without the Gospel is a worthless unity; it is the very unity of hell. Let us never be ensnared by those who speak kindly of it. Let us remember the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, "Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword" (Matthew 10:34) Let us remember the praise He gives to one of the Churches in Revelation, "I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false" (Revelation 2:2). Let us remember the blame He casts on another, "You *tolerate* that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess" (Revelation 2:20). Never let us be guilty of sacrificing any portion of truth—on the altar of peace. Let us rather be like the Jews, who, if they found any manuscript copy of the Old Testament Scriptures incorrect in a single letter, burned the whole copy, rather than run the risk of losing one jot or tittle of the Word of God. Let us be content with nothing short of the whole Gospel of Christ.

In what way are we to make **PRACTICAL USE** of the general principles which I have just laid down? I will give my readers one simple piece of advice. I believe it is advice which deserves serious consideration. I warn then every one who loves his soul—to be very selective as to the preaching he regularly hears, and the place of worship he regularly attends. He who deliberately settles down under any ministry which is unsound, is a very unwise man. I will never hesitate to speak my mind on this point. I know well that many think it a shocking thing, for a man to forsake his local church. I cannot see with the eyes of such people. I draw a wide distinction between teaching which is *defective* and teaching which is *thoroughly false*; teaching which is unscriptural. But I do believe, if false doctrine is preached in a local church, a Christian who loves his soul is quite right in not going to that local church. To hear unscriptural teaching fifty-two Sundays in every year is a serious thing. It is a continual dropping of *slow poison* into the mind! I think it almost impossible for a man willfully to submit himself to it, and not be harmed.

I see in the New Testament we are plainly told to "Test everything" and "Hold on to that which is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:21). I see in the Book of Proverbs that we are commanded to "Stop listening to instruction, my son, and you will stray from the words of knowledge" (Proverbs 19:27). If these words do not justify a man in ceasing to worship at a church, if positively false doctrine is preached in it, I do not know what words can.

Does any one mean to tell us, that to attend your local denominational church is absolutely needful to a person's salvation? If there is such a one, let him speak out, and give us his name. Does any one mean to tell us that going to the denominational church will save

any man's soul, if he dies unconverted and ignorant of Christ? If there is such a one, let him speak out, and give us his name. Does any one mean to tell us that going to the denominational church will teach a man anything about Christ, or conversion, or faith, or repentance, if these subjects are hardly ever named in the denomination church, and never properly explained? If there is such a one, let him speak out, and give us his name. Does any one mean to say that a man who repents, believes in Christ, is converted and holy, will lose his soul, because he has forsaken his denomination and learned his religion elsewhere? If there is such a one, let him speak out, and give us his name.

For my part, I abhor such monstrous and extravagant ideas. I do not see a speck of foundation for them in the Word of God. I trust that the number of those who deliberately hold them is exceedingly small. There are many churches where the religious teaching is little better than *Roman Catholicism*. Ought the congregation of such churches to sit still, be content, and take it quietly? They ought not. And why? Because, like Paul, they ought to prefer truth to peace.

There are many churches where the religious teaching is little better than *morality*. The distinctive doctrines of Christianity are never clearly proclaimed. Plato, or Seneca, or Confucius, could have taught almost as much. Ought the congregation in such churches to sit still, be content, and take it quietly? They ought not. And why? Because, like Paul, they ought to prefer truth to peace.

I am using strong language in dealing with this part of my subject—I know it. I am treading on delicate ground—I know it. I am handling matters which are generally let alone, and passed over in silence—I know it.

I say what I say from a sense of duty to the Church of which I am a minister. I believe the state of the times, and the position of the congregation require plain speaking. Souls are perishing, in many churches, in ignorance. Honest members of the church are confused and perplexed. This is no time for smooth words. I am not ignorant of those magic expressions, "division, schism, controversy," and the like. I know the cramping, silencing influence which they seem to exercise on some minds. I too have considered those expressions calmly and deliberately, and on each of them I am prepared to speak my mind.

(a) The denominational church is an admirable thing in theory. Let it only be well administered, and worked by truly spiritual ministers, and it is calculated to confer the greatest blessings on the nation. But it is useless to expect attachment to the denomination, when the minister of the denominational church is ignorant of the Gospel, or a lover of the world. In such a case we must never be surprised if men forsake their denomination, and seek truth wherever truth is to be found. If the denominational minister does not *preach* the Gospel and *live* the Gospel, the conditions on which he claims the attention of his congregation are virtually violated, and his claim to be heard is at an end. It is absurd to expect the head of a family to endanger the souls of his children, as well as his own—for the sake of "the denomination." There is no mention of *denominations* in the Bible, and we have no right to require men to live and die in ignorance, in order that they may be able to say at last, "I always attended my local denominational church."

(b) Divisions and separations in religion, are most objectionable. They weaken the cause of true Christianity. They give occasion to the enemies of all godliness to blaspheme. But before we blame people for them, we must be careful that we lay the blame where it is deserved. *False doctrine and heresy are even worse than schism*. If people separate themselves from teaching which is positively false and unscriptural, they ought to be praised rather than reproved. In such cases separation is a virtue—and not a sin. It is easy to make sneering remarks about "itching ears," and "love of excitement;" but it is not so easy to convince a plain reader of the Bible that it is his duty to hear false doctrine every Sunday, when by a little exertion he can hear truth.

(c) Unity, quiet, and order among professing Christians are mighty blessings. They give strength, beauty, and efficiency to the cause of Christ. But even gold may be bought too dear. Unity which is obtained by the sacrifice of truth, is worth nothing. It is not the unity which pleases God. The Church of Rome boasts loudly of a unity which does not deserve the name. It is *unity* which is obtained by taking away the Bible from the people, by gagging private judgment, by encouraging ignorance, by forbidding men to think for themselves. There is quiet and stillness enough in the grave, but it is not the quiet of health, but of death. It was the false prophets who cried "Peace!" when there was no peace.

(d) Controversy in religion is a hateful thing. It is hard enough to fight the *devil*, the *world* and the *flesh*, without private differences in our own camp. But there is one thing which is even worse than controversy, and that is *false doctrine tolerated, allowed, and permitted* without protest or challenge. It was controversy that won the battle of Protestant Reformation. If the views that some men hold were correct, it is plain we never ought to have had any Reformation at all! For the sake of peace, we ought to have gone on worshiping the Virgin Mary, and bowing down to images and relics to this very day! Away with such trifling! There are times when controversy is not only a duty—but a *benefit*. Give me the *mighty thunderstorm,* rather than the *deadly malaria*. The one walks in darkness and poisons us in silence, and we are never safe. The other frightens and alarms for a little while. But it is soon over, and it clears the air. It is a plain Scriptural duty to "contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints" (Jude 1:3).

I am quite aware that the things I have said are exceedingly distasteful to many minds. I believe many are content with teaching which is not the whole truth, and fancy it will be "all the same" in the end. I am sorry for them. I am convinced that nothing but the whole truth is likely, as a general rule, to do good to souls. I am satisfied that those who willfully put up with anything short of the whole truth, will find at last that their souls have received much damage. **There are three things which men never ought to trifle with: a little poison, a little false doctrine, and a little sin.**

I am quite aware that when a man expresses such opinions as those I have just brought forward, there are many who are ready to say, "He is not faithful to the Church." I hear such accusations unmoved. The day of judgment will show who were the true friends of the Church and who were not. I have learned in the last thirty-two years that if a minister leads a quiet life, leaves alone the unconverted part of the world, and preaches so as to offend none and edify none—that he will be called by many "a good pastor." And I have also learned that if a man studies Scriptures, labors continually for the conversion of souls, adheres closely to the great principals of the Reformation, bears a faithful testimony against Romanism, and preaches powerful, convicting sermons—he will probably be thought a firebrand and "troubler of Israel." Let men say what they will. They are the truest friends of the Church, who labor most for the preservation of truth.

I lay these things before the readers of this paper, and invite their serious attention to them. I charge them never to forget that *truth* is

of more importance to a Church than *peace*. I ask them to be ready to carry out the principles I have laid down, and to contend zealously, if needs be, for the truth. If we do this, we shall have learned something from Antioch.

III. But I pass on to the third lesson from Antioch. That lesson is, that "There is no doctrine about which we ought to be so jealous as justification by faith and not by observing the law."

The proof of this lesson stands out most prominently in the passage of Scripture which heads this paper. What one article of the faith had the Apostle Peter denied at Antioch? None. What doctrine had he publicly preached which was false? None. What, then, had he done? He had done this. After once keeping company with the believing Gentiles as "heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 3:6), he suddenly became shy of them and withdrew himself. He seemed to think they were less holy and acceptable to God, than the circumcised Jews. He seemed to imply, that the believing Gentiles were in a lower state than those who had kept the ceremonies of the law of Moses. He seemed, in a word, to add something to *simple faith* as needful to give a man an interest in Jesus Christ. He seemed to reply to the question, "What must I do to be saved?" not merely "Believe in the Lord Jesus," but "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and be circumcised, and keep the ceremonies of the law." Such conduct as this, the Apostle Paul would not endure for a moment. Nothing so moved him as the idea of adding anything to the Gospel of Christ. "I opposed him," he says, "to his face." He not only *rebuked* him, but he *recorded* the whole transaction fully, when by inspiration of the Spirit he wrote the Epistle to the Galatians.

I invite special attention to this point. I ask men to observe the remarkable jealousy which the Apostle Paul shows about this doctrine, and to consider the point about which such a stir was made. Let us mark in this passage of Scripture, the immense importance of justification by faith and not by keeping the law.

(a) This is the doctrine which is essentially necessary to our own personal comfort. No man on earth is a real child of God, and a saved soul, until he sees and receives salvation by faith in Christ Jesus. No man will ever have solid peace and true assurance, until he embraces with all his heart the doctrine that "we are counted righteous before God because of the work of our Lord Jesus Christ on the cross, by faith, and not for our own works and goodness." One reason, I believe, why so many professors in this day are tossed to and fro, enjoy little comfort, and feel little peace—is their ignorance on this point. They do not see clearly justification by faith without their own "good works."

(b) This is the doctrine which the great enemy of souls hates, and labors to overthrow. He knows that it turned the world upside down at the first beginning of the Gospel, in the days of the Apostles. He knows that it turned the world upside down again at the time of the Reformation. He is therefore always tempting men to reject it. He is always trying to seduce Churches and ministers to deny or obscure its truth. No wonder that the Council of Trent [Roman Catholic Council that established their present doctrines] directed its chief attack against this doctrine, and pronounced it accursed and heretical. No wonder that many who think themselves learned in these days, denounce the doctrine as theological jargon, and say that all "serious minded people" are justified by Christ, whether they have faith or not! The plain truth is that the doctrine is all bitterness and poison to unconverted hearts. It just meets the wants of the awakened soul. But the proud unhumbled man who knows not his own sin, and sees not his own weakness, cannot receive its truth.

(c) This is the doctrine, the absence of which accounts for half the errors of the Roman Catholic Church. The beginning of half the unscriptural doctrines of Catholicism may be traced up to rejection of *justification by faith*. No Catholic teacher, if he is faithful to his Church, can say to an anxious sinner, "Believe in the Lord Jesus—and you will be saved." He cannot do it without additions and explanations, which completely destroy the good news. He dare not give the *Gospel medicine*, without adding something which destroys its effectiveness, and neutralizes its power. Purgatory, penance, priestly absolution, the intercession of saints, the worship of the Virgin, and many other man-made services of Roman Catholicism, all spring from this source. They are all rotten props to support weary consciences. But they are rendered necessary by the denial of justification by faith.

(d) This is the doctrine which is absolutely essential to a minister's success among his people. Obscurity on this point spoils all. Absence of clear statements about justification will prevent the utmost zeal doing good. There may be much that is pleasing and nice in a minister's sermons, much about Christ and union with Him, much about self-denial, much about humility, much about love. But all this will profit little, if his trumpet gives an uncertain sound about justification by faith.

(e) This is the doctrine which is absolutely essential to the prosperity of a Church. No Church is really in a healthy state, in which this doctrine is not prominently brought forward. A denomination or church may have good forms and regularly ordained ministers, but a denomination or church will not see conversion of souls going on under its pulpits, when this doctrine is not plainly preached. Its schools may be found in every town. Its church buildings may strike the eye all over the land. But there will be no blessing from God on that denomination or church—unless justification by faith is proclaimed from its pulpits. Sooner or later its candlestick will be taken away. Why have the Churches of Africa and the East fallen to their present state? Did they not have ministers? They had. Did they not have forms and ceremony? They had. Did they not have councils? They had. But they cast away the doctrine of justification by faith. They lost sight of that mighty truth, and so they fell.

Why did our own Church (Church of England) do so little in the last century, and why did the Independents and Baptists do so much more? Was it that their system was better than ours? No. Was it that our Church was not so well adapted to meet the wants of lost souls? No. But their ministers preached justification by faith, and our ministers, in too many cases, did not preach the doctrine at all.

Why do so many English people go to dissenting churches in the present day? Why do we so often see a splendid Gothic local church as empty of worshipers as a barn in July, and a little plain brick building, called a Meeting House, filled to suffocation? Is it that people in general have any abstract dislike of formal worship, the Prayer-book, and the establishment? Not at all! The simple reason is, in the vast majority of cases, that people do not like preaching in which justification by faith is not fully proclaimed. When they cannot hear it in the local church—they will seek it elsewhere. No doubt there are exceptions. No doubt there are places where a long course of neglect has thoroughly disgusted people with the Church, so that they will not even hear truth from its ministers. But I believe, as a general rule, when the local church is empty and the meeting-house full, it will be found on inquiry that there is a cause.

If these things be so, the Apostle Paul might well be jealous for the truth, and oppose Peter to his face. He might well maintain that anything ought to be sacrificed, rather than endanger the doctrine of justification in the Church of Christ. He saw with a prophetical eye coming things. He left us all an example that we should do well to follow. Whatever we tolerate, let us never allow any injury to be done to that blessed doctrine—that we are justified by faith without any of our own "good works."

Let us always beware of any teaching which either directly or indirectly obscures justification by faith. All religious systems which put anything between the heavy burdened sinner and Jesus Christ the Savior, except simple faith, are dangerous and unscriptural. All systems which make out faith to be anything complicated, anything but a simple, childlike dependence, the hand which receives the soul's medicine from the physician, are unsafe and poisonous systems. All systems which cast discredit on the simple Protestant doctrine which broke the power of Roman Catholicism, carry about with them a plague-spot, and are dangerous to souls!

Baptism is a sacrament ordained by Christ Himself, and to be used with reverence and respect by all professing Christians. When it is used rightly, worthily and with faith, it is capable of being the instrument of mighty blessings to the soul. But when people are taught that all who are baptized are as a matter of course born again, and that all baptized persons should be addressed as "children of God," I believe their souls are in great danger. Such teaching about baptism appears to me to overthrow the doctrine of justification by faith. They only are children of God—who have faith in Christ Jesus. And all men do not have faith.

The Lord's Supper is a sacrament ordained by Christ Himself, and intended for the edification and refreshment of true believers. But when people are taught that all persons ought to come to the Lord's table, whether they have faith or not; and that all alike receive Christ's body and blood who receive the bread and wine, I believe their souls are in great danger. Such teaching appears to me to darken the doctrine of justification by faith. No man eats Christ's body and drinks Christ's blood, except the justified man. And none are justified until they believe.

Membership in the local church is a great privilege. But when people are taught that because they are members of a church, they are as a matter of course members of Christ, I believe their souls are in great danger. Such teaching appears to me to overthrow the doctrine of justification by faith. They only are joined to Christ who believe. And all men do not believe.

Whenever we hear teaching which obscures or contradicts justification by faith, we may be sure there is a screw loose somewhere. We should watch against such teaching, and be upon our guard. Once let a man turn away from justification by faith alone, and he will bid a long farewell to comfort, to peace, to lively hope, to anything like assurance in his Christianity. An error here is decay at the root.

(1) In conclusion, let me first of all ask every one who reads this paper, to arm himself with a thorough knowledge of the written Word of God. Unless we do this we are at the mercy of any false teacher. We shall not see through the mistakes of an erring Peter. We shall not be able to imitate the faithfulness of a courageous Paul. An ignorant congregation will always be the curse of a Church. A Bible reading congregation may save a Church from ruin. Let us read the Bible regularly, daily, and with fervent prayer, and become familiar with its contents. Let us receive nothing, believe nothing, follow nothing, which is not in the Bible, nor can be proved by the Bible. Let our rule of faith, our touchstone of all teaching, be the written Word of God.

(2) In the next place, let me entreat all who read this paper to be always ready to contend for the faith of Christ, if needful. I recommend no one to foster a controversial spirit. I want no man to be like Goliath, going up and down, saying, "Give me a man to fight with!" Always feeding upon controversy, is poor work indeed. It is like feeding upon bones! But I do say that no love of false peace should prevent us striving jealously against false doctrine, and seeking to promote true doctrine wherever we possibly can. True Gospel in the pulpit, true Gospel in the books we read, true Gospel in the friends we keep company with—let this be our aim, and never let us be ashamed to let men see that it is so.

(3) In the next place, let me entreat all who read this paper to keep a jealous watch over their own hearts in these controversial times. There is much need of this caution. In the heat of the battle we are apt to forget our own inner man. Victory in argument—is not always victory over the *world* or victory over the *devil.* Let the meekness of Peter in taking a reproof, be as much our example as the boldness of Paul in reproving. Happy is the Christian who can call the person who rebukes him faithfully, a "dear brother" (2 Peter 3:15). Let us strive to be holy in all our life, and not least in our tempers. Let us labor to maintain an uninterrupted communion with the Father and with the Son, and to keep up constant habits of private prayer and Bible-reading. Thus we shall be armed for the battle of life, and have the sword of the Spirit well fitted to our hand when the day of temptation comes.

(4) In the last place, let me entreat all members of a church who know what real praying is, to pray daily for the Church to which they belong. Let us pray that the Holy Spirit may be poured out upon it, and that its candlestick may not be taken away. Let us pray for those churches in which the Gospel is now not preached, that the darkness may pass away, and the true light shine in them. Let us pray for those ministers who now neither know nor preach the truth, that God may take away the veil from their hearts, and show them a more excellent way. Nothing is impossible. The Apostle Paul was once a persecuting Pharisee; Luther was once an unenlightened monk; Latimer was once a bigoted Catholic; Thomas Scott was once thoroughly opposed to evangelical truth. Nothing, I repeat, is impossible. The Spirit can make ministers preach that Gospel—which they now labor to destroy. Let us therefore be urgent in prayer.

I commend the matters contained in this paper to serious attention. Let us ponder them well in our hearts. Let us carry them out in our daily practice. Let us do this, and we shall have learned something from the story of Peter at Antioch.

SAVING FAITH

by J. C. Ryle

"God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish—but have everlasting life." John 3:16

In this verse, beloved, we have one of those "heavenly things," which our Lord had just spoken of to Nicodemus. Blessed indeed are the lips which spoke it, and blessed are the hearts which can receive it! In this verse we find a treasury of the most precious truth, a mine of inexhaustible matter, a well of ever-flowing waters; and when we consider the simple words in which our Lord has here brought together the whole body of divinity, we must willingly confess, with those who heard Him preach, "Never any man ever spoke like this man!"

Listen, I beg you, once more, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish—but have everlasting life." There is hardly an expression that a child could not easily explain, and yet there are doctrines here which the wisest upon earth must humbly receive, if they would enter into the kingdom of heaven and sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb. We learn in it, what philosophers of old could never clear up—the history of God's dealing with mankind, and the terms which He offers for their acceptance. Here is life, and here is death; here you have the deserts of man, and here you have the free grace of God; here you see what all may expect who follow their own course; and here also the way, the truth, and the life is directly pointed out.

And at this particular season of the year, when we are about so soon to commemorate the mysterious birth of Him who in mercy to our sins consented to take our nature on Him and be born of a virgin, even Christ Jesus, we cannot do better than examine the things which are herein contained. May the Eternal Spirit, through whom He offered Himself, the great Teacher whom He promised to send, be among us: may He arouse the careless; fix the inattentive; and make the subject profitable to all.

Now I conceive the chief things to be noticed in this verse are:

I. The state of the world, that is—of all mankind.

II. The love of God.

III. The gift of His Son.

IV. The means whereby we enjoy this gift.

V. And the promise attached to those who believe.

1. First, then, let us inquire **what the word of God has taught us respecting the world and the *world's character*.** Now, the testimony of Scripture upon this head is so clear and explicit, that he who runs may read, "The whole world," says John, "lies in wickedness." Our first father, Adam, was indeed created in the image of God, pure and sinless—but in one day he fell from his high estate by eating the forbidden fruit, he broke God's express command and became at once a sinful creature; and now all we his children have inherited from him—a wicked and a corrupt nature, a nature which clings to us from the moment of our birth, and which we show daily in our lives and conversation. In a word, we learn that from the hour of the fall our character has been established—that we are a sinful, a very sinful world.

Beloved, does this appear a hard saying? Do you think such a statement too strong? Away with the flattering thought! We see it proved in Scripture, for every book of the Old Testament history tells the melancholy story of man's disobedience and man's unbelief in things pertaining to God. We read there of **fearful judgments**, such as the flood and the destruction of Sodom—yet men disregarded them. We read of **gracious mercies**, such as the calling and protection of Israel—but men soon forgot them. We read of **inspired teachers and revelations from heaven**, such as the law of Moses—and men did not obey them. We read of **special warnings**, such as the voice of the prophets—and yet men did not believe them. Yes, beloved, we are a sinful world!

Think not to say within yourselves, "It may be so—but this happened in days of old; the world is better now." It will not avail you. We have read it in Scripture—but we see it also around us, and you will find at this time, even under your own eyes, convincing proof that the charge is literally true. Let any, for instance, examine the columns of a county newspaper, and he will see there within a month enough to make his ears tingle. I speak as unto wise men—you judge what I say. Will he not see accounts of nearly every sin which is abominable in the sight of God? Will he not read of anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, theft, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, emulations, variance, strife, seditions, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: "of the which," says the apostle (Gal. 5:21), "I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." And if such things take place in a land which is blessed with so much light and knowledge as our own, how much more should we find in countries where there is neither one nor the other! If men do these things in a green tree, oh, what shall they do in a dry?

Can you still doubt? I will go further. We see proof in ourselves. Let the best among you search his own heart; let him honestly cast up the number of evil thoughts and unholy ideas which pass through his imagination even in one single day—thoughts, I mean, which are known only to himself and the all-seeing God—and let him tell us whether it be not a most humiliating and soul-condemning calculation. Yes, dear friends, whether you will receive it or not—we are indeed a sinful world. It may be an humbling truth—but Scripture says it, and experience confirms it; and therefore we tell you that the world spoken of in our text is a world which lies in wickedness, a corrupt world, a world which our great Maker and Preserver might have left to deserved destruction, and in so doing would have acted with perfect justice; because He has given us laws and they have been broken, promises and they have been despised, warnings and they have not been believed.

II. The love of God. Such is the world of which we form a part, and such is its character. And now let us hear **what the feeling is with which God has been pleased to regard His guilty creatures**. We were all under condemnation, without hope, without excuse; and what could stay the execution of the sentence? *It was the love of God!* "God," says our text, "so loved the world." He might have poured on us the vials of His wrath, as He did on the angels who kept not their first estate—but no! He spared us, "God loved the world!" Justice demanded our punishment, holiness required we should be swept off the earth—but "God loved the world!" Praised be His name, we had nothing to do with *man's* judgment, which may not show mercy, when a crime is proved. We were in the hands of One whose ways are not as our ways, and whose thoughts are not as our thoughts—and hence, "God so loved the world." May we not well say with the Apostle, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! "(Rom. 11:33).

Consider, I ask you, this incomprehensible goodness! Do not many in this world think it no harm to remember injuries, and sometimes to resent them? Do we not find it hard to love those who have given us some slight offence? or if we do profess to love them, do we make any endeavor to promote their happiness? Such, alas! is too seldom our practice; there is but little real affection in these hard hearts. But we are not dealt with according to our own ways, for the God of holiness has loved the sinful world, which has continually dishonored and denied Him. Oh! beloved, let us dwell much on such expressions as these, for they are more precious than rubies; let us bear them continually in mind, for they will not fail us in the day of trial, when temptation is strong and faith weak; let us write them on our hearts and in our memories, and we shall find them a strong consolation in the hour of death and on the bed of sickness. God is indeed love—and God loved the world.

III. The gift of His Son. Let us next inquire in what way it pleased God to manifest this love. We had all sinned. Who then could put away this sin and present us clean and spotless before His throne? We had all failed utterly of keeping His holy laws. How then could we be clothed for the wedding-feast of our Master? Beloved, here is wisdom! This is the very point which the learned of this world could never understand. How, they have asked, can perfect justice and perfect mercy be reconciled? How can God justify His sinful creature, and yet be that Holy One whose law must needs be fulfilled? But all is explained in this simple verse, if you can receive it; and thus it was, *"He gave His only-begotten Son."*

Observe **the magnitude of this gift**, "His only-begotten Son." Can anything give you a more tender idea of God's love? Observe again the expression "He *gave*"—not because we had merited anything, for it was a free gift; not for our deservings, for it was all of grace. "By grace are you saved," says Paul to the Ephesians. "The gift of God is eternal life," says the same apostle to the Romans.

And for what purpose was His Son given? Beloved, He was given to atone for our guilt, by the sacrifice and death of Himself, as a lamb without spot and blemish; and by so doing He made a full, perfect, and sufficient oblation and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world. He was given to bear our iniquities and carry our transgressions upon the accursed tree, the cross; for being innocent Himself He was for our sakes accounted guilty, that we for His sake might be accounted pure. Nor is this all: He was given to fulfill the demands of that law which we have broken; and He did fulfill them. He "was tempted in all points," says Paul, "like as we are, and yet without sin". The prince of this world had nothing in Him, and thus He brought in an everlasting righteousness, which like a pure white raiment is unto all and upon all those who believe. (2 Cor. 5:21.)

It would be easy to dwell upon this delightful branch of our subject, beloved—but we must pass on.

IV. The means whereby we enjoy this gift. How then are the benefits of this gift made our own? What are the means through which it is applied to our souls? What is the hand by which we lay hold on this remedy?

Here again our text supplies an answer. It is FAITH. Whoever believes (not with the head, remember—but with the heart), and believing comes to Christ with a confession of his own unrighteousness, and accepts Him as his only hope of salvation—is saved by Faith.

Consider now the beautiful simplicity of this way of life. We do not see written on the gate—Whoever has prepared himself by long repentance—whoever has begun to lead a new life—whoever has done so many good works—whoever has attended church so many times—whoever has given so much in charity—these shall enter into heaven, and no others. No, dear friends; such announcements would frighten many a weary sinner, and these are fruits you will thankfully bring forth a hundredfold after you have entered.

But the only thing required of those who seek admission is faith, and he who approaches in simple childlike faith shall never be rejected. Hear how Paul speaks on this point (Rom. 10:5-10). And, lest anyone should suppose that God is a respecter of people, that there is one way for the rich and another for the poor, one for the learned, another for the unlearned, he adds these comfortable words: "For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him. For whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." But remember also—and I solemnly warn everyone of this—there is no other way to heaven—than the way of faith. God has not left each man to choose his own road to heaven—or his own path for coming unto Christ—but He has appointed one way and no more, and no man shall enter into life, except by this.

"If you believe not," says our Lord, "that I am He, you shall die in your sins!" And hence we may learn this most important lesson, that although God so loved the world, that He gave for it His only-begotten Son, still the benefits of that gift can never be obtained by those who will not believe.

V. And the promise attached to those who believe. It remains for us in the last place to consider the *promises and consequences* which our text holds forth to the faithful. We read that "whoever believes shall not perish—but have everlasting life." And is not this a promise the most acceptable to our nature that a gracious God could have devised? We know there is nothing the unconverted fear so much as death: people of the highest courage, who would shrink from no danger and encounter any difficulty, have been seen to tremble and turn pale at the approach of some pain or complaint which seems likely to bring their frail bodies to the grave. And why should this be so?—pain is not very bitter, and life with its cares and anxieties is not so very sweet as to account for it!

No, beloved, the reason is this. Conscience tells every unconverted person, whether he likes to confess it or not, that after death shall come the judgment; conscience tells him that all shall be judged according to their works—that he cannot abide this fiery trial, because he has sinned and not sought reconciliation, and he feels that he may one day have his part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone. Hence it is that he thinks death a most unpleasant subject, and with all his pride of life stands in cowardly fear of his last day; and hence you may understand how blessed these words should be to a sinner's ear, that "Whoever believes on Him shall not perish but have everlasting life."

Observe now the contents of this promise; look narrowly into it, for it will stand a close examination. The believer shall not perish; this earthly tabernacle may indeed be dissolved, and laid in the grave and see corruption—but the true sting of that death is sin, and this his Savior has taken on Him and put away. He shall not perish in the day of judgment; the second death can have no power over him; hell has no claims upon him, and then the words of our blessed Master shall be found a truth. "This is the will of Him that sent Me, that everyone which sees the Son, and believes on Him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:40). "I am the resurrection and the life: he who believes on Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die "(11:25, 26).

And more than this: the believer shall have everlasting life. He shall be raised body and soul at our Lord's second coming. He shall have part in that first resurrection, which belongs only to the saints, and finally shall dwell forever in that blessed place where "there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain—for the former things are passed away" (Rev. 21:4).

And now, beloved, judge for yourselves whether it be not true, that our text contains a treasury of precious and most consoling doctrines, and he who can hear it without feeling its value may indeed tremble for the safety of his immortal soul. Believer, let it be your care to carry home these comfortable words on which we have dwelt, and meditate upon them as your daily food throughout the week which is now before you. Let them be ever in your mind, and prepare you for that holy sacrament which Jesus has mercifully ordained; let them add strength to your faith and growth to your sanctification; let them increase your humility and your thankfulness, your zeal for God's glory, and your desire to show forth His praise, your love towards Christ and your love towards your brethren; for surely, dear friends, if God so loved us, it is a small matter if we love our fellow-sinners.

And you too, dear brethren, who have dared hitherto, like Gallio, to care for none of these things, you also are appealed to in this text. Learn then now, if you have not learned it yet, that this single verse, if there were no other, would be sufficient to condemn you in the last day, because it leaves you without excuse for remaining in your sins. You have deserved nothing but wrath; and yet, behold, here is God willing to save, loving, giving, promising all things. Oh! remember how great must be your guilt if you reject so great salvation. You are the very world that God has so loved; for your sakes He gave His only-begotten Son, and even now, at this minute, He is inviting you, by me, His minister, to accept the mercy which He freely offers, to be reconciled with Him who will one day be the judge of all. (Isaiah 55:1, 2; 1:18; Acts 16:31.)

Come then, I entreat you, to your Father, in the name of Christ, for through Him we have boldness and access with confidence. Resist the attempts of the world, the flesh and the devil to detain you; resist even your best friend, if he would keep you back from God and tell you there will be a more convenient season than today. "As though God did beseech you by us: we beg you in Christ's stead, be reconciled to God. For He has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. 5:20, 21).

May God the Holy Spirit bless the words which we have spoken, to the everlasting benefit of all your souls.

COME UNTO ME

by J. C. Ryle

"**Come unto Me**, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28.

There are few texts more striking than this in all the Bible—few that contain so wide and sweeping an invitation—few that hold out so full and comfortable a promise. Let us consider—

I. Who it is that speaks.

II. Who they are that are spoken to.

III. What is the invitation.

IV. What is the promise.

I. Who it is that speaks. That is a most important question, and it is right to have it answered.

You live in a world of promise. "Come with us," says one party, and you will be rich. "Come with us," says another, and you will be happy.

The devil can promise. "Eat the forbidden fruit," he said to Eve, "and you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. You shall never die." But he lied to her.

The world can promise. "Sell all and embark for California," says one man, "and you will soon roll in wealth." "Invest all your money in railways," says another, "and you will soon make your fortune." I never take up a newspaper without seeing many alluring invitations. I see page after page of advertisements, all full of high-sounding promises. I read of short ways to health, wealth, and happiness, of all descriptions. But it is all words and nothing more, and so many a man finds.

But He who promises in our text is One who can be depended on. It is the Lord Jesus Christ, God's own Son.

He is ABLE to do what He promises. He has all power in heaven and on earth. He has the keys of death and hell. The government is given to Him in time, and all judgment committed to Him in eternity.

He is FAITHFUL to do what He promises. He will not lie, nor deceive, nor break His promise. What He speaks that He will do, and what He undertakes that He will perform. Heaven and earth may pass away—but His word shall not pass away.

He is WILLING to do what He promises. He has long since proved this by the love He has shown to man, and the sacrifice He has made for man's soul. For man He came into the world; for man He suffered and died; for man He endured the cross and the shame. Surely He has a right to be believed.

Beloved brethren, see that you refuse not Him who speaks to you this day. If a letter came to you from the ruler of this country you

would not despise it. If you were sick, and advice came from a wise physician, you would not reject it. If you were in danger, and counsel came from your best and truest friend, you would not make light of it. Then hear the words that Jesus sends to you this day. Listen to the King of kings. Then body and soul shall be His.

II. Who they are that are spoken to. Jesus addresses the "laboring and heavy laden." "Come unto Me all you who labor and are heavy laden." Now, whom does this mean?

You must not imagine it describes the *poor in this world*. That would be a great mistake. It is possible to be poor in time and even poorer in eternity.

Nor yet must you imagine it describes the *sick and the afflicted*. That also is a great mistake. It is very possible to have trouble in this life and trouble in that to come—and this some of you may find.

The "laboring and heavy laden" describes all who are pressed down and burdened by a feeling of sin. It describes all whose consciences are set at work, and who are brought to concern about their soul—all who are anxious about salvation, and desire to have it—all who tremble at the thought of judgment, and know not how to get through it, and of hell, and are afraid of falling into it; and long for heaven, and dread not getting to it; and are distressed at the thought of their own sinfulness, and want deliverance. All such people appear to be the laboring and heavy laden to whom Jesus speaks.

This was the state of mind in which the Jews were to whom Peter preached on the day of Pentecost. Their consciences were awakened; they felt convinced and condemned; and when he had finished, we are told they said, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" This was the state of mind in which Saul was when Jesus met him going to Damascus, and smote him to the ground. A light seemed to break in on his mind. He got a sight of his enormous sin and danger; and we read that, trembling and astonished, he said, "Lord, what will You have me to do?" This was the state of mind in which we see the jailer at Philippi. He was roused from sleep by an earthquake. His fear brought his sin to his remembrance, and he came and fell down before Paul and Silas, and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

This is the state of mind I desire to see in each of you, for the beginning of all saving religion. **You will never come to Christ until you feel your need.**

You *ought*, everyone, to feel laboring and heavy laden. Truly it is a marvelous proof of man's corruption, that men can be so careless as they are. Many, I do believe, *feel something* of it—but never allow it. There are many aching hearts under silk and satin. There are many merry faces which only hide an uneasy conscience. All is not gold that glitters—many give the appearance of happiness, but are miserable. Few, I believe, are to be found who do not feel something of it *some time in their lives*. Halyburton said, not a soul in his parish—but once had conviction.

But to all laboring and heavy laden souls, whoever they may be, to you Jesus speaks—to you is this word of salvation sent. Take heed that it is not in vain.

Jesus speaks to ALL such: none are left out. Though you have been a persecutor like Saul, though a murderer like Manasseh, though a cheating extortioner like Zacchaeus, though unclean and profligate like Mary Magdalen—it does not matter. Are you laboring and heavy-laden?—then Jesus speaks to you. You may tell me, "I am such a sinner, Jesus never speaks to me." I answer, "It may be so—but are you laboring and heavy-laden?—then Jesus speaks to you. You may say, "I am not fit." I see nothing said of fitness; I only see Jesus calling the laboring and heavy-laden: if this is your case, He calls you. You may say, "I am not this—I am not converted." You do not know, perhaps—but are you laboring and heavy-laden?—then Jesus is speaking to you.

Ah! brethren, I fear many of you know nothing of the state of the soul here spoken of. Your sins never cut you to the heart—or give you a moment's sorrow. You never really felt the confession of the Church this day, "no health in us." You know nothing of communion with Christ. The remembrance of grievous burdens is not intolerable. You are satisfied with your present state: like Laodicea, "rich and increased with goods," comfortable and content. And what shall I say? I will say plainly, there is no hope for your soul while in such a state. I say if your soul is in such a state, better never have been born. Your hard heart must be broken. You must be brought to see your own guilt and danger, your eyes must be opened to understand your sinfulness. All who have entered heaven were once laboring and heavy laden; and except you are, you will never get there.

III. What is the invitation to the laboring and heavy laden? Jesus says, "come unto me."

I love that word "Come." To me it seems full of grace, mercy and encouragement. "Come now," says the Lord in Isaiah, "and let us reason together: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow."

Come is the word put in the mouth of the king's messenger in the parable of the guest-supper: "All is now ready; come unto the marriage."

Come is the last word in the Bible to sinners. "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come."

Jesus does not say, "Go and get ready." This is the word of the Pharisee and self-righteous. "Go and work out a righteousness. Do this and that and be saved." Jesus says, Come.

Jesus does not say "Send." This is the poor Roman Catholic's word. "Put your soul in the hand of the priest. Commit your affairs to saints and angels, and not to Christ." Jesus says *Come*.

Jesus does not say "Wait." This is the word of the enthusiast and the fanatic. "You can do nothing. You must not ask; you cannot pray; you must sit still." Cold comfort for troubled souls. Jesus says *come*.

Come is a word of ***merciful invitation***. It seems to say, "I want you to escape the wrath to come. I am not willing that any should perish. I have no pleasure in death. I would gladly have all men saved, and I offer all the water of life freely. So come to Me."

Come is a word of ***gracious expectation***. It seems to say, "I am here waiting for you. I sit on my mercy-seat expecting you to come. I wait to be gracious. I wait for more sinners to come in before I close the door. I want more names written down in the book of life before it is closed forever. So come to Me."

Come is a word of ***kind encouragement***. It seems to say, I have got treasures to bestow if you will only receive them. I have that to give which makes it worth while to come: a free pardon, a robe of righteousness, a new heart, a star of peace. So come to Me.

Brethren, I ask you to hear these words and lay them to heart. I plead for my Master; I stand here an ambassador; I ask you to come and be reconciled to God.

I ask you to ***come with all your sins***, however many they may be. If you come to Him they will be taken away. I ask you to *come as you are*. You feel unfit; you say you are not good enough. The worse you think yourself, the better prepared you are. Christ is not a Savior of those who think they are righteous—but of sinners. I ask you to *come now*. No other time is your own. The opportunity past, the door will be shut, and yourself dead. Come now. Come to Christ.

Ah! brethren, I fear that many of you will not take one saving step—will not come to Christ. You go on content with your own devices, like Balaam; like Felix, you never finally come to Christ.

I warn you plainly that you may come to church, and come to the Lord's table, and come to the minister, and yet never be saved. The one thing needed is actual coming to the Savior, actual coming to the Fountain, actual washing in the blood of atonement. Except you do this, you will die in your sins.

Gird up your loins like a man, and resolve that you will come. Do you feel vile and unworthy to come? Tell it to Jesus. Do you feel as if you know not what to say and do when you come? Tell it to Jesus. Tell Him you are all sin; tell Him you are all weakness; tell Him you feel as if you had no faith and no power, no grace and no strength, no goodness and no love—but come to Him, and commit your soul to His charge. Let nothing keep you back from Christ.

Tell Him you have heard that He receives sinners; that you are such a one, and you want to be saved. Tell Him you have nothing to plead but His own word—but He said Come, and therefore you come to Him.

IV. What is the promise. "I will give you rest."

Rest is a pleasant thing, and a thing that all seek after. The merchant, the banker, the tradesman, the soldier, the lawyer, the farmer—all look forward to the day when they shall be able to rest. But how few can find rest in this world! How many pass their lives in seeking it, and never seem able to reach it! It seems very near sometimes, and they imagine it will soon be their own. Some new personal calamity happens, and they are as far off rest as ever.

The whole world is full of restlessness and disappointment, weariness and emptiness. The very faces of worldly men let out the secret; their countenances give evidence that the Bible is true; they find no rest. "Vanity and vexation of spirit" is the true report of all here below. "Who will show us any good?" the bitter confession of many now, just as in David's time.

Take warning, young men and women. Do not think that happiness is to be found in any earthly thing. Do not have to learn this by bitter experience. Realize it while young, and do not waste your time in hewing out "cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water."

But Jesus offers rest to all who will come to Him. "Come unto Me," he says, "and I will give you rest." He will give it. He will not SELL it, as the Pharisee supposes—so much rest and peace in return for so many good works. He gives it freely to every coming sinner, without money and without price. He will not LEND, as the Arminian supposes, so much peace and rest, all to be taken away by-and-by if we do not please Him. He gives it forever and ever. His gifts are irrevocable.

"But what kind of rest will Jesus give me?" some men will say. "He will not give me freedom from labor and trouble. What kind of rest will He give?" Listen a few minutes, and I will tell you.

He will give you *rest from* ***guilt of sin***. The sins of the man who comes to Christ are completely taken away; they are forgiven, pardoned, removed, blotted out. They can no longer appear in condemnation against him! They are sunk in the depths of the sea. Ah! brethren, that is rest.

He will give you *rest from fear of* ***law***. The law has no further claim on the man who has come to Christ. Its debts are all paid; its requirements are all satisfied. Christ is the end of the law for righteousness. Christ has redeemed us from the curse of law. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect in the day of judgment?" No believer can run his eye over the fifth chapter of Matthew, and not feel comforted. And that is rest.

He will give you *rest from fear of* ***hell***. Hell cannot touch the man who has come to Christ. The punishment has been borne, the pain and suffering have been undergone by Jesus—and the sinner is free. And that, too, is rest.

He will give you *rest from fear of the* ***devil***. The devil is mighty—but he cannot touch those who have come to Christ. Their Redeemer is strong. He will set a hedge around them that Satan cannot overthrow. Satan may sift and buffet and vex—but he cannot destroy such. And that, too, is rest.

He will give you *rest from* ***fear of death***. The sting of death is taken away when a man comes to Christ. Jesus has overcome death, and it is a conquered enemy. The grave loses half its terrors when we think it is "the place where the Lord lay." The believer's soul is safe whatever happens to his body. His flesh rests in hope. This also is rest.

He will give you *rest in the* ***storm of affliction***. He will comfort you with comfort the world knows nothing of. He will cheer your heart, and sustain your fainting spirit. He will enable you to bear loss patiently, and to hold your peace in the day of trouble. Oh! this is rest indeed.

I know well, brethren, that believers do not enjoy so much rest as they might. I know well that they "bring a bad report of the land," and live below their privileges. It is their unbelief; it is their indwelling sin. There was a well near Hagar—but she never saw it. There was safety for Peter on the water—but he did not look to Jesus, and was afraid. And just so it is with many believers: they give way to needless fear—are straitened in themselves.

But still there is a real rest and peace in Christ for all who come to Him. The man that fled to the city of refuge was safe when once within the walls, though perhaps at first he hardly believed it; and so it is with the believer.

And, after all, the most downcast and complaining child of God has got a something within him he would not exchange for all the world. I never met with one, however low and desponding, who would consent to part with the rest and peace he had, however small. Like Naboth he prizes his little vineyard like a kingdom. And this shows me that coming to Christ can give rest.

Be advised, everyone of you who is now seeking rest in the world. Be advised, and come and seek rest in Christ. You have no home, no refuge, no hiding place, no portion. Sickness and death will soon be upon you—and you are unprepared. Be advised, and seek rest in Christ. There is enough in Him and to spare. Who has tried and did not find? A dying Welsh boy said, in broken English, "Jesus Christ is plenty for everybody." Know your privileges, all you who have come to Christ. You have something solid under foot and something firm under hand. You have a rest even now, and you shall have more abundantly.

Let me speak to *those who have not yet come to Christ*. Why do you not come? What possible reason can you give? What excuse can you show for your present conduct?

Will you tell me you have no need? What! no sin to be pardoned—no iniquity to be covered over! There is no state so bad as that of utter insensibility. Beware, lest you only awake to hear the word "Depart!"

Will you tell me you are happy without Christ? I do not believe you. I know you are not. You dare not look into your heart—you dare not search your conscience. It is the happiness of a tradesman who is bankrupt and does not look at his books. **There is no true happiness outside of Christ!**

Take heed. Every morning you are in awful danger. You stand on the brink of hell. Let a fever, an accident, an attack of disease carry you off—and you are lost forever. Oh! take the warning. Escape for your life. Flee, flee to Christ!

Let me speak to those *who have not come to Christ—but mean to some day*. I marvel at your presumption. Who are you, that talk of some day? You may be dead in a week. Who are you that talk of some day? You may never have the will or opportunity, if not today. How long will you go on halting between two opinions? You must come to Christ some time—some day; why not now? The longer you stay away, the less chance there is of your coming at all; and the less happiness will you have in the world. "Take heed, therefore, lest, a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it."

Many meant to have come in their old age—but put it off until too late. If like the Levite you put off your journey until late in the day, you must not wonder if the sun has gone down when you are far from home. Come now.

Let me speak to those *who have come to Christ indeed*. You are often cast down and disquieted within you. And why? Just because you do not abide in Christ and seek all rest and peace in Him. You wander from the fold: no wonder you return weary, footsore, and tired. Come again to the Lord Jesus and renew the covenant. Believe me, if you live to be as old as Methuselah, you will never get beyond this: a sinner saved by the grace of Christ. And think of the sinner's end.

Rest in Christ—and so rest indeed!

The Great Battle

By J. C. Ryle

All men ought to love peace. War is an immense evil, though it is a necessary evil sometimes. Battles are bloody and distressing events, though sometimes nations cannot maintain their rights without them. But all men ought to love peace. All ought to pray for a quiet life.

All this is very true, and yet there is one war which it is a positive duty to carry on; there is one battle which we ought to be always fighting. The battle I speak of is the battle against the *world*, the *flesh*, and the *devil*. With these enemies we never ought to be at peace; from this warfare no man ought ever to seek to be discharged, while he is alive.

Reader, give me your attention for a few minutes, and I will tell you something about the great battle.

Every professing Christian is the soldier of Christ. He is bound by his baptism to fight Christ's battle against sin, the world, and the devil. The man that does not do this, breaks his vow--he is a spiritual defaulter; he does not fulfill the engagement made for him. The man that does not do this, is practically renouncing his Christianity. The very fact that he belongs to a Church, attends a Christian place of worship, and calls himself a Christian, is a public declaration that he desires to be reckoned a soldier of Jesus Christ.

Armor is provided for the professing Christian, if he will only use it. "Take unto you," says Paul to the Ephesians, "the whole armor of God." "Stand, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breast-plate of righteousness." "Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God." "Above all, take the shield of faith" (Ephes. vi. 13-17). And not least, the professing Christian has the best of leaders, —Jesus the Captain of salvation, through whom he may be more than conqueror; the best of provisions—the bread and water of life; and the best of pay promised to him—an eternal weight of glory.

All these are ancient things. I will not be drawn off to dwell on them now.

The one point I want to impress on your soul just now is this—that if you want to be saved, you must not only be a soldier, but a *victorious* soldier. You must not only profess to fight on Christ's side against sin, the world, and the devil, but you must actually fight and overcome.

Now this is one grand distinguishing mark of true Christians. Other men perhaps like to be numbered in the ranks of Christ's army; other men may have lazy wishes, and languid desires after the crown of glory--but it is the true Christian alone, who does the work of a soldier. He alone fairly meets the enemies of his soul, really fights with them, and in that fight overcomes them.

Reader, one great lesson I wish you to learn this day is this—that if you would prove you are born again and going to heaven, you must be a victorious soldier of Christ. If you would make it clear that you have any title to Christ's precious promises, you must fight the good fight in Christ's cause, and in that fight you must conquer.

Victory is the only satisfactory evidence that you have a saving religion. You like good sermons, perhaps; you respect the Bible, and read it occasionally; you say your prayers night and morning; you have family prayers, and give to religious societies. I thank God for this--it is all very good. *But how goes the battle?* How does the great conflict go on all this time? Are you overcoming the love of the world and the fear of man? Are you overcoming the passions, tempers, and lusts of your own heart? Are you resisting the devil, and making him flee from you? How is it in this matter? My dear brother or sister, you must either rule or serve sin, and the devil, and the world. There is no middle course. You must either conquer or be lost.

I know well it is a hard battle that you have to fight, and I want you to know it too. You must fight the good fight of faith, and endure hardships, if you would lay hold of eternal life; you must make up your mind to a daily struggle, if you would reach heaven. There may be *shortcuts* to heaven invented by man; but ancient Christianity—the good old way—is the way of the cross--the way of conflict. Sin, the world, and the devil must be actually mortified, resisted, and overcome.

This is the road that saints of old have trodden in, and left their record on high.

When *Moses* refused the pleasures of sin in Egypt, and chose affliction with the people of God—this was overcoming: he overcame the love of pleasure.

When *Micaiah* refused to prophesy smooth things to king Ahab, though he knew he would be persecuted if he spoke the truth—this was overcoming: he overcame the love of ease.

When *Daniel* refused to give up praying, though he knew the den of lions was prepared for him—this was overcoming: he overcame the fear of death.

When *Matthew* rose from the receipt of custom at our Lord's bidding, left all and followed Him—this was overcoming: he overcame the love of money.

When Peter and *John* stood up boldly before the Council and said, "We cannot but speak the things we have seen and heard"—this was overcoming: they overcame the fear of man.

When *Saul* the Pharisee gave up all his prospects of preferment among the Jews, and preached that Jesus whom he had once persecuted—this was overcoming: he overcame the love of man's praise.

Reader, the same kind of thing which these men did you must also do, if you would be saved. They were men of like passions with yourself, and yet they overcame; they had as many trials as any you can possibly have, and yet they overcame. They fought, they wrestled, they struggled: you must do the same.

What was the secret of their victory? Their faith! They believed on Jesus, and believing were made strong. They believed on Jesus, and believing were held up. In all their battles they kept their eyes on Jesus, and He never left them or forsook them. They overcame by the blood of the Lamb, and the word of His testimony, and so may you.

Reader, I set these truths before you: I ask you to lay them to heart. Resolve, by the grace of God, to be an OVERCOMING Christian.

I do fear much for many professing Christians: I see no sign of fighting in them, much less of victory; they never strike one stroke on the side of Christ. They are at peace with His enemies: they have no quarrel with sin. Reader, I warn you--that this is not Christianity; this is not the way to heaven.

Men and women who hear the Gospel regularly, I often fear much for you. I fear lest you become so familiar with the sounds of its doctrines, that insensibly you become dead to its power. I fear lest your religion should sink down into a little vague talk about your own weakness and corruption, and a few sentimental expressions about Christ, while real practical fighting on Christ's side is altogether neglected. Oh, beware of this state of mind! "Be doers of the Word, and not hearers only." No victory—no crown! Fight and overcome!

Young men and women, and especially those who have been brought up in religious families, I fear much for you. I fear lest you get a habit of giving way to every temptation. I fear lest you be afraid of saying "No!" to the world and the devil—and when sinners entice you, think it least trouble to consent. Beware, I do beseech you, of giving way. Every concession will make you weaker. Go into the world resolved to fight Christ's battle—and fight your way on.

Believers in the Lord Jesus, of every Church and rank in life, I feel much for you. I know your course is hard: I know it is a sore battle you have to fight; I know you are often tempted to say, "It is of no use, and to lay down your arms altogether."

Cheer up, dear brethren and sisters: take comfort, I entreat you; look at the bright side of your position. Be encouraged to fight on: the time is short, the Lord is at hand, the night is far spent. Millions as weak as you have fought the same fight; not one of all those millions has been finally led captive by Satan. Mighty are your enemies—but the Captain of your salvation is mightier still--His arm, His grace, and His Spirit shall hold you up! Cheer up! be not cast down.

What though you lose a battle or two? You shall not lose all. What though you faint sometimes? You shall not be quite cast down. What though you fall seven times? You shall not be destroyed. Watch against sin--and sin shall not have dominion over you. Resist the devil--and he shall flee from you. Come out boldly from the world--and the world shall be obliged to let you go. You shall find yourselves in the end more than conquerors: you shall overcome.

Reader, let me draw from the whole subject a few words of **application**, and then I have done.

For one thing, let me warn all formalists and self-righteous people--to take heed that they are not deceived. You imagine that you will go to heaven because you go regularly to church; you indulge an expectation of eternal life, because you are always at the Lord's table, and are never missing in your pew. But where is your repentance? Where is your faith? Where are your evidences of a new heart? Where is the work of the Spirit? Where are the proofs that you are fighting the great battle? Oh, formal Christian, consider these questions! Tremble! Tremble, and repent!

For another thing, let me warn all careless members of Churches to beware lest they trifle their souls into hell. You live on year after year as if there was no battle to be fought with sin, the world, and the devil; you pass through life a smiling, laughing, gentleman-like or ladylike person, and behave as if there was no devil, no heaven, and no hell. Oh, careless Churchman, or careless Dissenter, careless Episcopalian, careless Presbyterian, careless Independent, careless Baptist, awake and see eternal realities in their true light! Awake, and put on the armor of God! Awake, and fight hard for life! Tremble! Tremble, and repent!

Reader, the great battle must be fought by all who want to be saved. And more than this, it must be won!

The Character of the True Christian

by J. C. Ryle

"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." (John 10:27)

That is a glorious saying, a perfect and complete text; containing all I need to know for my soul's comfort, full of privileges and mercies for true believers and penitent sinners, and at the same time shutting the door effectually against self-righteous Pharisees and whitened sepulchers and painted hypocrites. It shows us two things: the character of real Christians, and the spiritual treasures they possess. Or, in other words, what they are to their Savior—and what their Savior is to them. I propose this morning to consider these two things in order, and I pray God you may all be led to examine yourselves by the light which the text affords.

I. First, then, with respect to true Christians—their names, their marks, their character—what does the text say about them? "My sheep," we read, "hear my voice and follow me." The Lord Jesus Christ likens them to sheep; and He declares "they are mine, and they hear me and follow me." There is matter we shall do well to consider in each of these expressions.

True Christians, then, are compared to SHEEP, and we shall find a great depth of meaning in the comparison if we look into it. Sheep are the most **harmless, quiet, inoffensive creatures** that God has made. So should it be with Christians: they should be very humble and lowly-minded, as disciples of Him who said, "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart." They should be known as people of a very gentle and loving spirit, who desire to do good to all around them, who would not injure anyone by word or deed; who do not seek the great things of this world—but are content to go straightforward on the path of duty and take whatever it shall please God to send them. They ought to show forth in their lives and outward conversation that the Holy Spirit has given them a new nature, has taken away their old corrupt disposition and planted in them godly thoughts and purposes and desires.

When, therefore, we see people biting and devouring one another, saying and doing uncharitable things to their neighbors, fierce, and passionate and evil-tempered and angry on the slightest occasion; full of envy and strife and bitter speaking—surely we are justified in saying, "You do not belong to Christ's flock; you have yet to be born again and made new creatures; there must be a mighty change. Profess what you please, at present we can only see in you the mind of the old man, even Adam the first—but nothing of the Second Adam, even Christ Jesus the Lord. We can discern the spirit of the wolf, however fair your clothing, and we want instead to discover in you the spirit of the lamb."

But again, sheep are of all animals the most **useful**; none are so serviceable to man, none so necessary in every way for his comforts and conveniences; and such should be the character of a true Christian. We must study to do good in our day and generation, and lay ourselves out for the spiritual and temporal advantage of our brethren. All can do much: it is not the rich alone, and the great, who are able to be useful; there are a hundred ways of conferring benefits beside the form of giving gold and silver; and each in his respective station can do good if he desires.

Has not a poor man a *tongue?* Then surely, if he is a sheep of Christ's flock, he will use it for his neighbors' profit, when occasion is afforded; he will warn and entreat and counsel and persuade; he will reason and argue, as a witness and servant of God, against sin and carelessness in every shape; he will show himself an affectionate lover of men's souls, who would gladly impart to others the knowledge he has found valuable to himself. He will never allow wickedness to pass unnoticed if, by saying a quiet word on the Lord's side, he may perchance restrain it. He will never allow anger and strife to continue, if he can be the means of making peace.

And then has not a poor man a feeling *heart?* Then surely, if he is a true sheep of Christ's flock, he will remember those who are in adversity, as being himself in the body. He will not shun the house of mourning—but strive to be a comforter, bearing in mind the proverb "A word spoken in season, how good is it." He will weep with those who weep, as well as rejoice with those who rejoice. He will let men see that he is a real child of his Father in heaven, who does good to the just and the unjust too, and is kind even to the unthankful and the evil.

And cannot a poor man *pray?* Yes! and effectual fervent prayer avails much. And if he prays for the souls of others, who knows but he may draw down benefits on all around him? Oh! but a real praying Christian, a man who is constantly asking for the Spirit to come down on the place in which he dwells and convert the sleepers—that man is a mighty benefactor. He is working a powerful

engine, and if he is the cause of one single person being converted, he has done something that makes all heaven rejoice.

Brethren, let it be written on our minds that all *can* do much, and those who belong to Christ's flock *will* strive to do much. No man is so really useful in a church, as a true Christian; and no one can have much real Christianity about him who does not endeavor to do good either by his advice or by his example or by his prayers. Are we indeed the sheep of Christ? Let us never forget this point of our character.

A genuine Gospel-faith has **nothing selfish** about it—it never makes a man think only of his own salvation. It stirs him up, on the contrary, to concern about the souls of others. I always suspect that those who care nothing whether their brethren are saved or not, must in reality be ignorant or thoughtless about their own state.

Again. Sheep **love to be together**; they do not like being alone; there are no animals which seem to take such pleasure in being in a flock, and cling to each other's company so faithfully. And so is it with true Christians: it is their delight to meet each other and be together, if possible. It is their continual sorrow and complaint that far too often they have to journey on alone, without any who are like-minded to commune with, about the things which their souls love most; and this is a very sore trial. Friends and relations may be kind and affectionate, they may have everything to make this world enjoyable—but what Christ's sheep sigh and crave after is to have with them people who can enter into their secret feelings, who understand the unseen workings of their inward man, who can comprehend the hidden warfare which goes on in their hearts—people with whom they can take sweet counsel about their souls' health and souls' trials, with whom they can converse freely and unreservedly about their Lord and Master and their hopes of forgiveness through His name.

Who, indeed, can describe the pleasure with which the members of Christ's flock do meet each other face to face? They may have been strangers before; they may have lived apart, and never been in company—but it is wonderful to observe how soon they seem to understand each other, there seems a thorough oneness of opinion, and taste and judgment, so that a man would think they had known each other for years; they seem, indeed, to feel they are servants of one and the same Master, members of the same family, and have been converted by one and the same Spirit; they have one Lord, one faith, one baptism; they have the same trials, the same fears, the same doubts, the same temptations, the same faintings of heart, the same dread of sin, the same sense of unworthiness, the same love of their Savior. Oh—but there is a mystical union between true believers, which they only know who have experienced it; the world cannot understand it—it is all foolishness to them. "Whatever can you find," they say, "to make you take such interest in each other's society?" But that union does really exist, and a most blessed thing it is; for it is like a little foretaste of heaven.

Beloved, this loving to be together is a special mark of Christ's flock—nor is it strange if we consider they are walking in the same narrow way, and fighting against the same deadly enemies—and never are they so happy as when they are in company. The unconverted know nothing of such happiness; they meet each other, and are civil and polite, and even kind in their way—but how seldom do they open their whole hearts, how much of jealousy and cold suspicion there is about their very friendships, how much they conceal from their nearest acquaintances! The sheep of Christ know nothing of all this; it is their hearts' desire to be together, and when together they have all their thoughts in common, there is no reserve, no keeping back.

No doubt there are false professors in the world, who have a form of godliness without the power—tinkling cymbals whose religion consists only in talk, all sound and no substance—but notwithstanding the number of these hypocrites, I still say that true believers are remarkable for their love of communion and fellowship with each other; they are ready to pine away with heaviness when separate; it is their very life-breath to be together.

The last thing I would remark about sheep is this: they are of all animals most **helpless**, most **ready to stray**, most likely to lose themselves and wander out of their pasture; and so it is with Christ's people. They are far too ready to turn aside and go in ways that are not good; in vain they are warned and advised to be watchful and take heed to their path; they often get into a drowsy, sleepy frame, and imagine there is no danger, and so they wander down some bypath, and are only wakened by some merciful chastisement or heavy fall. They imagine that they are strong enough to get on without this constant vigilance, and so they take their eye off the Chief Shepherd, and wander on from this field to that, after their own desires, until they find themselves at last in darkness and doubt. And Christ's sheep, too, like other sheep, do seldom return to the fold without some damage and loss, for it *is far more easy to get out of the right way when you are in—than to get into it when you are out.*

There are some people who imagine Christians are perfect and faultless creatures—but this is indeed an opinion far wide of the truth. No doubt they aim at perfection—but the very best come far short of it; they would tell you that in many things they offend daily, that they are continually erring and straying and backsliding, that the most fitting prayer they could offer up would be this: "Lord, we are no better than wandering sheep. God be merciful to us unworthy sinners!"

And then, too, like sheep, true Christians are **easily frightened**. It takes very little to alarm them and make them fearful about their own condition; they are jealous and suspicious of danger from every quarter, and, like creatures who know their own weakness and the number of their enemies, they will often imagine there is something to be feared where no fear really is. But still this godly fear is an eminent sign of Christ's flock—it proves that they feel their own helplessness; and when a man knows nothing of it, and is full of presumptuous confidence, there is but too much reason to suspect he knows little of Christianity as he ought to know it.

Such appear to be the reasons why true believers are compared to sheep. They may not always be discerned in this corrupt and naughty world; you may often see no great difference between them and the unbelievers—but still they have a nature of their own, and sooner or later, if you observe, you will see it. You may put a flock of sheep and a flock of swine together in a broad green meadow, and an ignorant man might say at first their natures were the same—but drive them together in a narrow road, with a puddle at one side, and the mind of the animal will soon come out. The swine may have looked clean in the meadow—but as soon as they have the opportunity they will wallow in the mud. The sheep were clean in the meadow, and when they come to the dirt they will keep clean there too if they possibly can. Just so is the case of the Christian and the world: when things run smoothly, and there is no particular inducement to sin, there seems no mighty difference between them—but when there comes a temptation, and self-denial is required, immediately the disposition of the heart comes uppermost—the Christian holds on his way, however narrow it may be, the worldly-minded turns down that broad lane which leads to destruction, and the real character of each is revealed.

II. The second thing to be considered in our text is that word "My." Our Lord does not simply call His people sheep—but He says also "My sheep." It is as though Jesus would have us understand **He looks upon them as His property**; they are, as it were, stamped and sealed and marked as the possession of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and it is a blessed, comfortable thought that even as men are careful and tender about their earthly belongings, and will not willingly allow them to be lost and damaged, so is our Lord and Savior careful of the souls that belong to Him.

But why are Christ's people called Mine, in this particular manner? There are many sufficient reasons. **We are "His" by *ELECTION.*** We were chosen and given to Him by the Father before the foundations of the world were laid; our names were written in the covenant of salvation before we were born, we were predestined or fore-ordained to be His people from all eternity. That is a glorious, a soul-comforting doctrine, however some abuse it: a man may doubtless get to heaven and never feel sure that he was a true sheep of Christ's flock until he gets there; he may walk in much darkness and uncertainty all his days—but to all who really feel in themselves the working of Christ's Spirit, the doctrine that we are *His* by everlasting election, is full of sweet, pleasant and unspeakable consolation.

But again: **Christ's people are "His "by *PURCHASE.*** Death and hell had claims upon everyone of them, they had all broken the law and forfeited eternal life—but Christ has redeemed them. Christ paid the heavy price of their salvation, even His own most precious blood, and well may He call them "Mine," for He has bought them off from captivity and Satan at the cost of His own life. He can say "They are Mine by fair purchase in time, as well as Mine by free election in eternity."

And lastly, **Christ's people are "His" by *ADOPTION.*** He has put His Spirit in them, and overturned the power of sin in their hearts. He has given them a child-like frame of mind, so that they cry Abba Father; they are become part of His family, the very sons and daughters of the Almighty; He looks upon them as a portion of Himself, as members of His body and flesh and bones, and loves them and cherishes them accordingly.

See then, beloved, what great things that little word "My "contains. "My sheep" is the name that Jesus gives to Christians. "Mine" by election, by purchase, by adoption. Oh, believe: you may sometimes be cast down and faint-hearted—but if you have any real interest in that blessed title, if you are really in the number of Christ's sheep, you have indeed good reason to rejoice.

III. But I must hasten on to the third point which our text lays down in the character of true believers "**My sheep**," says Jesus, "**hear My voice**." This hearing of Christ's voice, what is it? It cannot be the mere hearing of the ears, for many do that who die in their sins. It must be the hearing with the heart, the listening with attention; the believing what is heard—the acting manfully on what is believed. And where may Christ's voice be heard? It sometimes whispers in a sinner's *conscience*, saying, Oh, do not these abominable things: turn, turn, why will you die? It sometimes speaks solemnly, in a visitation of *providence*, as a sickness or an accident or an affliction or a death, saying slowly but clearly, "Stop and think; consider your ways: are you ready to die and be judged?" But it generally is to be heard in the reading of *Scripture* or the preaching of the Gospel; then the voice of the Lord Jesus may be heard plain and distinct. One day it is sharp and piercing: "Except you repent you shall all likewise perish;" "You must be born again." "Awake, you who sleep, and arise from the dead." Another day it is gentle, winning, entreating: "Come unto me, O weary and heavy-laden one, and I will give you rest." "If any man thirsts, let him come unto me and drink." "Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely." In all these ways and manners the voice of Jesus may be heard.

And here comes in the distinction between the converted and the unconverted. Those who are converted hear Christ's voice—but they that are unconverted hear it not. The true sheep of Christ were once foolish and disobedient, serving divers lusts and pleasures, dead in trespasses and sins—but they heard their Redeemer's voice at last, and when they heard they lived; they knew not at first who called them—but they heard a voice they could not disobey, and now they can tell you they are sure it was the Lord's. They heard His voice, they listened to His invitation, they believed His promises, they confessed themselves sinners, and in Him they found peace. And now without His voice they will do nothing; His word, His saying, His command, His will is their rule of life—to be taught of Him by His Spirit and His Bible is their hearts' desire and prayer—to hear about Him from His ministers is the food and drink of their souls. Their ears are like a dry soil, ever thirsting to drink in the water of life. Sometimes they may be tempted to turn aside to hear what the world can offer—but they soon go back again to sit at Jesus' feet and hear His voice, with sorrow and shame and wonder for their own backslidings. The world cannot see that Christ's voice is such a joyful sound; they dislike it—it offends them; to be told they are sinners, and must repent and believe or perish, is a stumbling-block. But Christ's sheep are never offended; day after day they listen diligently to their Shepherd's teaching; no music is so sweet to their ears as Jesus' voice, and whether preached or written there is nothing they love so much. It seems as if it were spoken for their own particular case, and they cannot, they dare not, they would not for all the world disregard it.

IV. I must go on to the fourth and last mark of a true believer. "**My sheep**," says the text in John, "hear my voice and **follow me.**" To *follow* Christ, that is the grand mark of Christians. No man shall ever say of them, they profess and do not practice, they say and do nothing for their Master's sake; they must not only hear their Master's voice—but follow Him. To follow Christ is to place implicit trust in Him as our Redeemer, Savior, Prophet, Priest, King, Leader, Commander and Shepherd; and to walk in His ways, straightforwards. It is to take up our cross and subscribe our name among His people, to look to the Lamb as our Guide and follow Him wherever He goes. We are not to follow our own devices and trust in ourselves for salvation; we are not to follow that vain shadow of a hope, our own doings and performances—but we are to fix our eyes and hearts on Christ; on Him we are to rest our faith for free and full forgiveness, to Him we are to pray for grace to help in time of need, after Him we are to walk, as the best, the brightest, the purest example. The way may be narrow and steep, we must press forward, not turning to the right hand or the left; the way may be dark, we must keep on—there will be light enough in heaven.

O that Christians, the very best of them, were not so slack in following! Some stop to trifle with the perishable things of earth. Some stop to pick up the gaudy, scentless flowers by the wayside. Some stop to sleep, forgetting this is not our rest, it is enchanted ground. Some stop to pick holes and find fault with their fellow-travelers. Few of Christ's sheep do hold on their way as steadily as they might. But still, compared with the world, they are following Christ Jesus. Oh that they would only remember, those who follow Him most fully, shall follow Him most comfortably! They are following Christ Jesus, and they know where they are going; and even in the dark river, in the valley of the shadow of death, they feel a confidence that their Shepherd will be with them, and His rod and His staff will comfort them. They would all tell you they are poor wandering sheep, less than the least of all God's mercies, ashamed of the little fruit they bear—but still, weak as they are, they are determined to follow on to the end, and to say, "None but Christ, in life and in

death, in time and in eternity."

Such is the character which the text gives of true Christians. They are compared to sheep; they are called Christ's property; they hear His voice, and they follow Him. To go further at this time would be plainly impossible, and I therefore purpose, if the Lord will, to speak to you about the other branch of the text—the privileges of Christians—this evening. By God's blessing you shall then hear what their Savior is to His people. It only remains to wind up what has been already said by PERSONAL APPLICATION.

I told you this was a text for ***self-inquiry;*** and in that light I press upon each of you now. I call upon you, O man or O woman, to put your hand upon your heart and ask that little question, "Am I a sheep of Christ's flock—or am I not? Do I hear His voice or do I not? Do I follow Him or do I not?" Does not your Redeemer and your judge say plainly, "This is the character of my people?" Does He not give you the most certain marks by which to try your state? and if you cannot see in yourself these marks, where and what are your claims to eternal life? Without them you are, for the present, no better than a lost soul. Do you not know there are only to be two sorts of characters before the judgment-seat—sheep on the right hand in honor, and goats on the left hand in disgrace? And do you not know it is just the same even now? There are only two classes of people upon earth—men who hear Christ and follow Christ and are in a way to be saved; and men who neither hear nor follow Him and are in a way to be lost? And which flock do you belong to? There is no middle state. Examine yourself and be wise in time.

Think not to put off this question by saying, "I shall do as well as the rest of the world,"—that well may be doing very badly. The way of the world, indeed! Bring the world to the bar, and try it by the text, "Does the world hear Christ?" Who will stand forth and say it does? Christ's promises and invitations and warnings and threatenings and instructions and exhortations are all alike disregarded and despised; the world is deaf to them; they might never have been spoken. "Oh," says the world, "we shall do very well without minding all that; it was not meant for us." And who was it meant for, then?

But again, does the world follow Christ? Who will stand up and say Yes to that? No, indeed! Christ's ways and Christ's example, holiness and love and meekness and temperance and self-denial, are the exceptions—the rare, scarce things in the world; and the things most frequent are anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, drunkenness, revellings, wantonness, pride, vanity, idleness, spiritual sloth, Bible-despising, prayer-neglecting, church-forgetting, worldliness, and the like. "Oh, never mind," says the world; "we shall do very well without being so strict." Very well in the devil's opinion, who would love to ruin every living soul—but not very well in God's. No; indeed the world will neither follow Christ nor hear Christ, anything else sooner—and yet remember it is the character of those who are to have eternal life that they hear Christ's voice and follow Him. Sinner, remember, today I have told you.

And think not, O man, to put me off by saying, "At this rate very few will be saved." You say very truly, and the Lord Jesus Christ Himself foretold it. But let me tell you a secret: Why is it so few are likely to be saved? God would have all men brought unto the knowledge of the truth: why do so many, so very many, come short and take the broad way which leads to destruction? Simply because they will not believe what God has told them in His word; simply because they will have it God will not stand to what He has written in His Bible; they will imagine heaven is to be entered without being Christ's sheep—will have their own way and not God's.

Remember, then, this day, I tell you, that God is willing to receive you *if you will only turn to Him:* if you will only resolve to think for yourself and never mind the world, if you will only hear the voice of the Lord Jesus Christ and follow Him, if you will only be in earnest and come unto Him for forgiveness and His Holy Spirit, He shall grant you your heart's desire, and you shall never perish but have eternal life. But whether you will hear or whether you will forbear, Christ and Christ only is the way, the truth, and the life—and whatever the world may tell you, no man shall ever come unto the Father but by Him.

All Kinds of Strange Teachings

by J. C. Ryle

"Do not be carried away by *all kinds of strange teachings*! It is good for our hearts to be strengthened by grace, not by ceremonial foods, which are of no value to those who eat them." Hebrews 13:9

The text which heads this paper is *an apostolic caution against false doctrine*. It forms part of a warning which Paul addressed to Hebrew Christians. It is a caution just as much needed now—as it was eighteen hundred years ago. Never, I think, was it so important for Christian ministers to cry aloud continually, "Do not be carried away by *all kinds of strange teachings!*"

That old enemy of mankind, the devil, has no more subtle instrument for ruining souls, than that of spreading false doctrine. "A murderer and a liar from the beginning!" "Be careful! Watch out for attacks from the Devil, your great enemy. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for some victim to devour!"

Outside the Church, he is ever persuading men to maintain sinful lives, and destructive superstitions. Human sacrifice to idols, gross revolting, cruel, worship of disgusting and abominable false deities, persecution, slavery, cannibalism, child murder, devastating religious wars—all these are a part of Satan's handiwork, and the fruit of his suggestions! Like a pirate, his object is to "sink, burn, and destroy!"

Inside the Church he is ever laboring to sow heresies, to propagate errors, to foster departures from the faith. If he cannot *prevent* the waters flowing from the Fountain of Life, he tries hard to *poison* them. If he cannot destroy the remedy of the Gospel, he strives to adulterate and corrupt it. No wonder that he is called "Apollyon, the destroyer."

The Divine Comforter of the Church, the Holy Spirit—has always employed one great weapon to oppose Satan's plans. That weapon is the *Word of God.* The Word expounded and unfolded, the Word explained and opened up, the Word made clear to the head—and applied to the heart. The Word is the chosen weapon by which the devil must be confronted and confounded. The Word was the *sword*

which the Lord Jesus wielded in His temptations. To every assault of the Tempter, He replied, "It is written!" The Word is the sword which His ministers must use in the present day, if they would successfully resist the devil. The Bible, faithfully and freely expounded —is the safeguard of Christ's true Church.

I desire to remember this lesson, and to invite attention to the text which stands at the head of this paper. We live in an age when men profess to dislike dogmas and creeds, and are filled with a morbid dislike to controversial theology. He who dares to say of one doctrine that "it is true," and of another that "it is false," must expect to be called *narrow-minded* and *uncharitable*, and to lose the praise of men. Nevertheless, the Scripture was not written in vain. Let us examine the mighty lessons contained in Paul's words to the Hebrews. They are lessons for *us*—as well as for them.

I. First, we have here a *broad warning*: "Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings."

II. Secondly, we have here a *valuable prescription*: "It is good for our hearts to be strengthened by grace, not by ceremonial foods."

III. Lastly, we have here an *instructive fact*: "Ceremonial foods are of no value to those who eat them."

On each of these points I have something to say. If we patiently plow up this *field of truth*, we shall find that there is *precious treasure* hidden in it!

1. First, we have here a BROAD WARNING. "Do not be not carried away by all kinds of strange teachings." The meaning of these words is not a hard thing to understand. "Be not tossed back and forth," the Apostle seems to say, "by every blast of false teaching, like ships without compass or rudder. False doctrines will arise as long as the world lasts, in many numbers, with varying minor details—in one point alone always the same—strange, new, foreign, and departing from the Gospel of Christ. They do exist now. They will always be found within the visible Church. Remember this, and do not be carried away." Such is Paul's warning.

The Apostle's warning does not stand alone. Even in the midst of the Sermon on the Mount, there fell from the loving lips of our Savior, a solemn caution: "Watch out for false prophets! They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves!" (Matthew 7:15). Even in Paul's last address to the Ephesian elders, he finds time to warn his friends against false doctrine: "Even from your own number, men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:30).

Note what the Second Epistle to the Corinthians says: "I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:3). Note what the Epistle to the Galatians says: "I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel." "Who has bewitched you?" "After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?" "How is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable principles?" "You are observing special days and months and seasons and years!" "I fear for you." "Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery." (Galatians 1:6; 3:1, 3; 4:9, 10, 11; 5:1).

Note what the Epistle to the Ephesians says: "No longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming" (Ephesians 4:14). Note what the Epistle to the Colossians says: "See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world, rather than on Christ" (Colossians 2:8). Note what the First Epistle to Timothy says: "The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith" (1 Timothy 4:1). Note what the Second Epistle of Peter says: "There will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies" (2 Peter 2:1). Note what the First Epistle of John says: "Do not believe every spirit. Many false prophets have gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1). Note what the Epistle of Jude says: "Contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints. For certain men have secretly slipped in among you" (Jude 1:3, 4).

These things were written for our learning. What shall we say about these texts? How they may strike *others* I cannot say. I only know how they strike me. To tell us, as some do, in the face of these texts, that *the early Churches were a model of perfection and purity*—is absurd. Even in Apostolic days, its appears, there were abundant errors both in doctrine and practice. To tell us, as others do, that pastors ought never to handle controversial subjects, and never to warn their people against erroneous views—is senseless and unreasonable. If we did this then we would have to ignore most of the New Testament. Surely the *dumb dog* and the *sleeping shepherd* are the best allies of the wolf, the thief, and the robber! It is not for nothing that Paul says, "If you point these things out to the brothers, you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 4:6).

A plain warning against false doctrine is especially needed in the present day. The school of the *Pharisees*, and the school of the *Sadducees*, those ancient mothers of all mischief, were never more active than they are now! Between those who bury truth under additions—and those who mutilate it by subtractions; between superstition—and infidelity; between Roman Catholicism—and New Theology; between Ritualism—and Rationalism; between these upper and lower millstones the Gospel is near being crushed to death!

Strange views are continually propounded by pastors about subjects of the deepest importance. About the atonement, the divinity of Christ, the inspiration of the Bible, the reality of miracles, the eternity of future punishment, about the Church, the ministerial office, the Lord's Supper, Baptism, the confessional, the honor due to the Virgin Mary, prayers for the dead. About all these things there is nothing too outrageous to be taught by some ministers in these latter days. By the *pen* and by the *tongue*, by the *press* and by the *pulpit*, the country is incessantly deluged with a flood of erroneous opinions. To ignore the fact is mere blindness! Others see it, even if we pretend to be ignorant of it. The danger is real, great, and unmistakable! Never was it so needful to say, "Do not be carried away by *all kinds of strange teachings*!"

Many things combine to make the present inroad of false doctrine peculiarly dangerous. There is an undeniable *zeal* in some of the teachers of error—and their "earnestness" makes many think they must be right. There is a great appearance of *learning* and *theological* knowledge—and many imagine that such clever and intellectual men must surely be safe guides. There is a general tendency to *free thought* and *free inquiry* in these latter days—and many like to prove their independence of judgment, by believing novelties. There is a wide-spread desire to appear *charitable* and *liberal-minded*—and many seem half ashamed of saying that anybody can be in the wrong. There is a great quantity of *half-truth* taught by the modern false teachers—and they are incessantly

using Scriptural terms and phrases in an unscriptural sense. There is a morbid craving in the public mind for a more sensuous, ceremonial, sensational, showy worship—and men are impatient of inward, invisible heart-work. There is a silly readiness in every direction—to believe everybody who talks cleverly, lovingly, and earnestly—and a determination to forget that Satan often masquerades himself "as an angel of light" (2 Corinthians 11:14). There is a wide-spread "gullibility" among professing Christians—and every heretic who tells his story plausibly is sure to be believed—and everybody who doubts him is called a bigot and a narrow-minded man.

All these things are peculiar symptoms of our times. I defy any observing person to deny them. They tend to make the assaults of false doctrine in our day peculiarly dangerous. They make it more than ever needful to cry aloud, "Do not be carried away by *all kinds of strange teachings*!"

If any one should ask me, What is the best safeguard against false doctrine? I answer in one word, "The Bible—the Bible regularly read, regularly prayed over, regularly studied." We must go back to the old prescription of our Master: "Diligently study the Scriptures" (John 5:39). If we want a weapon to wield against the plans of Satan, there is nothing like "the sword of the Spirit—the Word of God." But to wield it successfully, we must read it habitually, diligently, intelligently, and prayerfully. This is a point on which, I fear, many fail. In an age of hurry and activity, few read their Bibles as much as they should. More books perhaps are read than ever—but less of the one Book which makes man wise to salvation!

The Roman Catholic Church and new theology, could never have made such havoc in the Church in the last fifty years—if there had not been a most superficial knowledge of the Scriptures throughout the land. A Bible-reading congregation is the strength of a Church. "Diligently study the Scriptures!"

Great are the *difficulties of unbelief*—it requires more faith to be an unbeliever than a Christian. But greater still are the difficulties of Rationalism. Free handling of Scripture—results of modern criticism—broad and liberal theology—all these are fine, swelling, high-sounding phrases, which please some minds, and look very grand at a distance. But the man who looks below the surface of things will soon find that there is no sure standing-ground between ultra-Rationalism and Atheism.

"Diligently study the Scriptures." Mark what a conspicuous absence there is in the New Testament of what may be called the *Sacramental* system, and the whole circle of *Ritualistic* theology. Mark how extremely little there is said about the effects of *Baptism*. Mark how very seldom the *Lord's Supper* is mentioned in the Epistles. Find, if you can, a single text in which New Testament ministers are called *sacrificing priests*, or the Lord's Supper is called a *sacrifice*, or private confession to ministers is recommended and practiced. Turn, if you can, to one single verse in which sacrificial *vestments* are named as desirable, or in which lighted candles, and pots of flowers on the Lord's Table, or processions, and incense, and flags, and banners, and bowing down to the bread and wine, or prayer to the Virgin Mary and the angels, are sanctioned. Mark these things well, and you will find it very hard to be a Ritualist! You may find your authority for Ritualism in garbled quotations from the Fathers, in long extracts from monkish mystics, or from Popes—but you certainly will not find it in the Bible! Between the plain Bible, honestly and fairly interpreted, and extreme Ritualism—there is gulf which cannot be passed.

"If we would not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings," we must remember the words of our Lord Jesus Christ: "Diligently study the Scriptures." **Ignorance of the Bible is the root of all error. Knowledge of the Bible is the best antidote against modern heresies.**

II. I now proceed to examine Paul's VALUABLE PRESCRIPTION: "It is good for our hearts to be strengthened by grace, not by ceremonial foods." There are two words in this prescription which require a little explanation. A right understanding of them is absolutely essential to a proper use of the Apostle's advice. One of these words is "foods," and the other is "grace."

To see the full force of the word "foods" we must remember the immense importance attached by many Jewish Christians to the distinctions of the ceremonial law about food. The flesh of some animals and birds, according to Leviticus, might be eaten—and that of others might not be eaten. Some foods were, consequently, called "clean," and others were called "unclean." To eat certain kinds of flesh made a Jew ceremonially unholy before God, and no strict Jew would touch and eat such food on any account. Now were these distinctions still to be kept up, after Christ ascended into heaven—or were they done away by the Gospel? Were *heathen converts* under any obligation to attend to the *ceremonial* of the *Levitical law* about food? Were *Jewish Christians* obliged to be as strict about the foods they ate—as they were before Christ died, and the veil of the temple was torn in two? Was the *ceremonial law* about foods entirely done away—or was it not? Was the conscience of a believer in the Lord Jesus to be troubled with fear, lest his food should defile him?

Questions like these appear to have formed one of the great subjects of controversy in the Apostolic times. As is often the case, they assumed a place entirely out of proportion to their real importance. The Apostle Paul found it needful to handle the subject in no less than three of his Epistles to the Churches. "Food," he says, "does not bring us near to God." "The kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking." "Do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink." (1 Corinthians 8:8; Romans 14:17; Colossians 2:16). Nothing shows the fallen nature of man so clearly—as the readiness of morbid and scrupulous consciences to turn *trifles* into *serious* things. At last the controversy seems to have spread so far and obtained such dimensions, that "foods" became an expression to denote *anything ceremonial added to the Gospel as a thing of primary importance*, any Ritual trifle thrust out of its lawful place and magnified into an essential of religion. In this sense, I believe, the word must be taken in the text now before us.

By **"foods"** Paul means "ceremonial observances," either wholly invented by man, or else built on Mosaic precepts which have been abrogated and superseded by the Gospel. It is an expression which was well understood in the Apostolic days. The word **"grace"** on the other hand, seems to be employed as a comprehensive description of the whole Gospel of Jesus Christ. Of that glorious Gospel, grace is the main feature, grace in the original scheme, grace in the execution, grace in the application to man's soul. Grace is the fountain of life from which our salvation flows. Grace is the agency through which our spiritual life is kept up.

Are we justified? It is by grace.

Are we called? It is by grace.

Have we forgiveness? It is through the riches of grace.

Have we good hope? It is through grace.

Do we believe? It is through grace.

Are we elect? It is by the election of grace.

Are we saved? It is by grace.

Why should I say more? The time would fail me to exhibit fully the part which grace does in the whole work of redemption. No wonder that Paul says to the Romans, "We are not under the law, but under grace!" And tells Titus, "The grace of God which brings salvation has appeared to all men." (Romans 3:24; Galatians 1:15; Ephesians 1:7; 2Thessalonians 2:16; Acts 18:27; Romans 1:15; Ephesians 2:5; Romans 6:15; Titus 2:11).

Such are the two great principles which Paul puts in strong contrast in the prescription we are now considering. He places opposite to one another "foods" and "grace"; Ceremonialism and the Gospel; Ritualism and the free love of God in Christ Jesus. And then he lays down the great principle that it is by "grace," and "not foods," that the heart is strengthened.

Now "strengthening of the heart" is one of the great wants of many professing Christians. Especially is it longed after by those whose knowledge is imperfect, and whose conscience is half enlightened. Such people often feel in themselves much indwelling sin, and at the same time see very indistinctly God's remedy and Christ's fullness. Their faith is feeble, their hope dim, and their consolations small. They want to realize more tangible comfort. They fancy they ought to feel more and see more. They are not at ease. They cannot attain to joy and peace in believing. Where shall they turn? What shall set their consciences at rest? Then comes the enemy of souls, and suggests some *shortcut road* to establishment. He hints at the value of some addition to the simple plan of the Gospel, some man-made gimmick, some exaggeration of a truth, some flesh-satisfying invention, some improvement on the old path—and whispers, "Only use this, and you shall be strengthened." Plausible offers flow in at the same time from every quarter, like *quack* medicines. Each has its own patrons and advocates. On every side the poor unstable soul hears invitations to move in some particular direction, and then shall come perfect strength.

"Come to us!" says the Roman Catholic. "Join the Catholic Church, the Church on the Rock, the one, true, holy Church; the Church that cannot err. Come to her bosom, and rest your soul in her protection. Come to us, and you will find strength!"

"Come to us!" says the extreme Ritualist. "You need higher and fuller views of the priesthood and the Sacraments, of the Real Presence in the Lord's Supper, of the soothing influence of daily service, daily masses, confession to priests, and priestly absolution. Come and take up sound Church views, and you will find strength!"

"Come to us," says the violent Liberationist. "Cast off the traditions and rules of established Churches. Enjoy religious liberty. Throw away forms and Prayer-books. Join our party. Cast in your lot with us, and you will soon be strengthened."

"Come to us!" say the Plymouth Brethren. "Shake off all the bondage of creeds and Churches and systems. We will soon show you higher, deeper, more exalting, more enlightened views of truth. Join the brethren, and you will soon be strengthened!"

"Come to us!" says the Rationalist. "Lay aside the old worn-out clothes of unfruitful schemes of Christianity. Give your reason free scope and play. Begin a freer mode of handling Scripture. Be no more a slave to an ancient old book. Break your chains—and you shall be strengthened!"

Every experienced Christian knows well, that such appeals are constantly made to *unsettled minds* in the present day. Who has not seen that, when boldly and confidently made, they produce a painful effect on some people? Who has not observed that they often beguile unstable souls—and lead them into misery for years?

"What does the Scripture say?" This is the only sure guide. Hear what Paul says. Heart strength is not to be obtained by joining this party or that. It comes "by grace, and not by foods." Other things have a "show of wisdom" perhaps, and give a temporary satisfaction "to the flesh." (Colossians 2:23). But they have no healing power about them in reality, and leave the unhappy man who trusts them nothing bettered—but rather worse.

A clearer knowledge of the Divine scheme of grace, its eternal purposes, its application to man by Christ's redeeming work; a firmer grasp of the doctrine of grace, of God's free love in Christ, of Christ's full and complete satisfaction for sin, of justification by simple faith, a more intimate acquaintance with Christ the Giver and Fountain of grace, His offices, His sympathy, His power; a more thorough experience of the inward work of grace in the heart—this, this, this is the grand secret of heart strength. This is the old path of peace. This is the *true panacea* for restless consciences. It may seem at first too simple, too easy, too cheap, too commonplace, too plain. But all the wisdom of man will never show the heavy-laden a better road to heart-rest.

Secret pride and self-righteousness, I fear, are too often the reason why this good old road is not used. I believe there never was a time when it was more needful to uphold the old Apostolic prescription than it is in the present day. Never were there so many weak and worried Christians wandering about, and tossed to and fro, from lack of knowledge. Never was it so important for faithful ministers to set the trumpet to their mouths and proclaim everywhere, "Grace, grace, grace, not foods, establishes the heart."

From the days of the Apostles there have never been a lack of *quack spiritual doctors*, who have professed to heal the wounds of conscience with *man-made* remedies. In our own beloved Church there have always been some who have in heart turned back to Egypt, and, not content with the simplicity of our worship, have hankered after the ceremonial fleshpots of the Catholic Church. To hear the Sacraments incessantly exalted, and preaching played down; to see the Lord's Supper turned into an idol, under the pretext of making it more honorable; to find plain worship overlaid with so many newfangled ornaments and ceremonies that its essentials are quite buried—how common is all this! These things were once a pestilence which walked in darkness. They are now a destruction which wastes in noonday. They are the joy of our enemies, the sorrow of the Church's best children, the damage of English Christianity, the plague of our times. And to what may they all be traced? The neglect and the forgetfulness of Paul's simple

prescription: *"Grace, and not foods, strengthens the heart."*

Let us take heed that in our own personal religion, grace is all. Let us have clear systematic views of the Gospel of the grace of God. Nothing else will do good in the hour of sickness, in the day of trial, on the bed of death—in the swellings of Jordan. Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith, Christ's free grace the only foundation under the soles of our feet—this alone will give peace. Once let in *self*, and *forms*, and *man's inventions*, as a necessary part of our religion—and we are on a quicksand! We may be amused, excited, or kept quiet for a time, like children with toys, by a religion of "foods." Such a religion has "a show of wisdom." But unless our religion is one in which "grace" is all—we shall never feel strengthened.

III. In the last place, I proceed to examine the INSTRUCTIVE FACT which Paul records. He says, "Ceremonial foods are of no value to those who eat them."

We have no means of knowing whether the Apostle, in using this language, referred to any particular Churches, or individuals. Of course it is possible that he had in view the Judaizing Christians of Antioch and Galatia, or the Ephesians of whom he speaks to Timothy in his pastoral Epistle; or the Colossians who caused him so much inward conflict; or the Hebrew believers in every Church, without exception. It seems to me far more probable, however, that he had no particular Church or Churches in view. I rather think that he makes a broad, general, sweeping statement about all who in any place had exalted *ceremonies* at the expense of the doctrines of "grace." And he makes a wide declaration about them all. They have gotten no good from their favorite notions. They have not been more inwardly happy, more outwardly holy, or more generally useful. Their religion has been most unprofitable to them.

Man-made alterations of God's precious medicine for sinners; man-made additions to Christ's glorious Gospel, however greatly defended and plausibly supported, do no real good to those who adopt them. They confer no increased inward comfort; they bring no growth of real holiness; they give no enlarged usefulness to the Church and the world.

Calmly, quietly, and mildly—but firmly, decidedly, and unflinchingly, the assertion is made, "Ceremonial foods are of no value to those who eat them." The whole stream of Church history abundantly confirms the truth of the Apostle's position. Who has not heard of the hermits and ascetics of the early centuries? Who has not heard of the monks and nuns and recluses of the Roman Catholic Church in the middle ages? Who has not heard of the burning zeal, the devoted self-denial of Romanists like Xavier, and Ignatius Loyola? The earnestness, the fervor, the self-sacrifice of all these classes, are matters beyond dispute. But none who read the records of their lives carefully and intelligently, can fail to see that they had no solid peace or inward rest of soul. Their very feverish restlessness is enough to show that their consciences were not at ease. None can fail to see that, with all their furious zeal and self-denial, they never did much good to the world. They gathered round themselves admiring partisans. They left a high reputation for self-denial and sincerity. They made men wonder at them while they lived, and sometimes canonize them when they died. But they did nothing to convert souls.

And what is the reason of this? They attached an overweening importance to man-made ritual and ceremonies, and made less than they ought to have done of the Gospel of the grace of God. Their principle was to make much of "ceremony," and little of "grace." Hence they verified the words of Paul, "Ceremonial foods are of no value to those who eat them."

The very history of our own times bears a striking testimony to the truth of Paul's assertion. In the last twenty-five years, scores of clergymen have seceded from the Church of England, and joined the Church of Rome. They wanted more of what they called Catholic doctrine and Catholic ceremonial. They honestly acted up to their principles, and went over to Rome. They were not all weak, and illiterate, and second-rate, and inferior men; several of them were men of commanding talents, whose gifts would have won for them a high position in any profession. Yet what have they gained by the step they have taken? What profit have they found in leaving "grace" for "ceremonies," in exchanging Protestantism for Catholicism? Have they attained a higher standard of holiness? Have they procured for themselves a greater degree of usefulness? The religious system which exalts ceremonies and man-made ritual, does no real good to its adherents, compared to the simple old Gospel of the grace of God.

Let us turn now, for a few moments, to the other side of the picture, and see what "grace" has done. Let us hear how profitable the doctrines of the Gospel have proved to those who have clung firmly to them, and have not tried to mend and improve and patch them up by adding, as essentials, the "foods" of man-made ceremonies.

It was "grace, and not foods," which made Martin Luther do the work that he did in the world. The key to all his success was his constant declaration of justification by faith, without the deeds of the law. This was the truth which enabled him to break the chains of Rome, and let light into Europe.

It was "grace, and not ceremonial foods," which made our English martyrs, Latimer and Hooper, exercise so mighty an influence in life, and shine so brightly in death. They saw clearly, and taught plainly, the true priesthood of Christ, and salvation only by grace. They honored God's grace—and God put honor on them.

It was "grace, and not ceremonial foods," that made Romaine and Venn, and their companions, turn the world upside down in England, one hundred years ago. In themselves they were not men of extraordinary learning or intellectual power. But they revived and brought out again the real pure doctrines of grace.

It was "grace, and not ceremonial foods," that made Simeon and Daniel Wilson and Bickersteth such striking instruments of usefulness in the first half of the present century. God's free grace was the great truth on which they relied, and continually brought forward. For so doing God put honor on them. They made much of God's grace—and the God of grace made much of them.

The list of ministerial biographies tells a striking tale. Who are those who have shaken the world, and left their mark on their generation, and aroused consciences, and converted sinners, and edified saints? Not those who have made asceticism, and ceremonials, and sacraments, and services, and ordinances the main thing; but those who have made most of God's free grace! In a day of strife, and controversy, and doubt, and perplexity, men forget this.

Facts are stubborn things. Let us look calmly at them, and be not moved by those who tell us that daily services, processions, incense, bowings, crossings, confessions, absolutions, and the like, are the secret of a prosperous Christianity. Let us look at plain facts. Facts in

old history, and facts in modern days, facts in every part of England, support the assertion of Paul. The religion of "ceremonial foods" does "not profit those that are occupied therein." It is the religion of grace which brings inward peace, outward holiness, and general usefulness.

Let me wind up this paper with a few words of **PRACTICAL APPLICATION**. We are living in an age of peculiar religious danger. I am quite sure that the advice I am going to offer deserves serious attention.

(1) In the first place, let us not be surprised at the rise and progress of *false doctrine.* It is a thing as old as the old Apostles. It began before they died. They predicted that there would be plenty of it before the end of the world. It is wisely ordered by God, for the testing of our grace, and to prove who has real faith. If there were no such thing as false doctrine or heresy upon earth—I would begin to think the Bible was not true.

(2) In the next place, let us make up our minds to resist false doctrine, and not to be carried away by fashion and bad example. Let us not flinch, because all around us, high and low, rich and poor, are swept away, like geese in a flood, before a torrent of Catholicism. Let us be firm and stand our ground.

Let us resist false doctrine, and contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. Let us not be ashamed of showing our colors and standing out for New Testament truth. Let us not be stopped by the alarm cry of "controversy." The thief likes dogs which do not bark, and watchmen which give no alarm. The devil is a thief and a robber. If we hold our peace, and do not resist false doctrine—we please him and displease God.

(3) In the next place, let us try to preserve the old Protestant principles of the Church, and to hand them down uninjured to our children's children. Let us not listen to those faint-hearted Churchmen who would have us forsake the ship, and desert the Church in her time of need.

(4) In the last place, let us make sure work of our own personal salvation. Let us seek to know and feel that we ourselves are "saved." The day of controversy is always a day of spiritual peril. Men are apt to confound *orthodoxy* with *conversion*, and to fancy that they must go to heaven if they know how to answer Catholic Priests. Yet mere earnestness without knowledge, and mere head-knowledge of true doctrine, alike save none. Let us never forget this.

Let us not rest until we feel the blood of Christ sprinkled on our consciences, and have the witness of the Spirit within us that we are born again. This is reality. This is true religion. This will last. This will never fail us. It is the possession of grace in the heart, and not the intellectual knowledge of doctrine, which alone profits and saves the soul.

THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS

by J. C. Ryle

"This is His name whereby He shall be called—the Lord our Righteousness." Jeremiah 23:6.

The time is short. It is but a little while, and the Lord Jesus shall come in His glory. The judgment shall be set and the books shall be opened. "Before Him shall be gathered all nations," "that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he has done, whether it be good or bad." The inmost secrets of all hearts shall be revealed; "and the kings of the earth, the nobles, the military commanders, the rich, the powerful, and every slave and free person," will stand together on a level at the judgment, and will see each other face to face, and one by one will have to give account of themselves to God before the whole world. Thus it is written, and therefore it is true and sure to come to pass.

And what does each of you intend to say in that hour? What is the defense you are prepared to set up? What is the answer you propose to give? What is the cause you mean to show why sentence should not be pronounced against you?

Verily, beloved, I do fear that some among you do not know. You have not thought about it yet—you have resolved to think about it some day soon; or you are not quite clear about it at present; or you have made out some ingenious, plausible scheme which will not stand the touchstone of the Bible. Oh, what a fearful case is yours! Life is indeed uncertain; the loveliest or the strongest here may perhaps be taken next—you cannot make an agreement with death—and yet you cannot tell us what you are resting upon for comfort. You do not know how soon the last trumpet may sound, and yet you are uncertain as to the ground of your hope. Surely these things ought not so to be.

Did any of you ever happen to visit a court of justice just before the prisoners are tried? Have you not remarked how anxiously each one is consulting with his friends and his lawyers as to the defense he shall make—how earnest they are, how careful to leave no stone unturned that may help to prove their innocence? And yet the greater part of them are liable to no more than a few months' imprisonment—or a few years' restitution; perhaps they may get off altogether by a quibble of the law—or through lack of evidence.

See now how differently you act in the matter of your souls. In the great day there will be no lack of witnesses; your thoughts and words and actions will appear written in the book one after another. Your judge is a searcher of hearts. And yet, in spite of all these facts, too many of you sleep on—as if the Bible were not true; too many of you know not how or why you are to escape God's wrath and condemnation.

Hearken then, if you love life, while I endeavor to give you some instruction from the words of my text. The great question to be made known is, "How shall man be just with God? How can I come before the Lord in innocence?" and I wish this morning, if the Lord will, to make you understand:

I. That you must have *perfect* righteousness—or you will not be saved.

II. That you have no righteousness of your own of any sort, and therefore by yourself you cannot be saved.

III. That the Lord Himself must be your Righteousness, and so you shall be saved.

May God the Holy Spirit, who can convert the most aged, the most careless, the most sinful (I speak that which I do know myself), accompany the words I am about to speak, and make them seasonable to all your souls!

I. You must have *perfect* righteousness—or you will not be saved.

The Bible says plainly, "The wrath of God is revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." "The unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God." "Let me die the death of the righteous," says Balaam, "and let my last end be like his." "The Lord loves the righteous—but the way of the wicked He turns upside down." "The righteous has hope in His death." Your people," says Isaiah to his God, "shall be all righteous." "The cursed shall go away into everlasting punishment—but the righteous into life eternal." "Have on the breastplate of righteousness," says Paul to the Ephesians. And how shall any one presume to say that he can enter into heaven without it!

But I wish here to expose the folly of all those who talk in a loose and general way about God's mercy. Men will often say, when urged to think about their salvation, "Indeed I know I am not what I should be; I have broken God's law very often—but He is very merciful, and I hope I shall be forgiven." Truly, I do believe that the religion of many goes no further than this. This is the only point they can lay hold of; this is the only rock on which they build: press them for a reason of their hope, and there is no answer; ask them to explain the ground of their confidence, and they cannot do it. "God is merciful" is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last, of all their Christianity. Now, I am bold to say, beloved, this is an immense delusion—a refuge of lies that will not stand being compared with Scripture, and, more than this, it will not last one instant in the fire of trial and affliction.

Have you not ever heard that God is a God of perfect holiness—holy in His character, holy in His laws, holy in His dwelling-place? "Speak unto the children of Israel," says the Book of Leviticus, and say unto them, "You shall be holy; for I the Lord your God am holy." "He is a holy God," says Joshua; "He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins." "You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity," says Habakkuk. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." And the book of Revelation, speaking of heaven, says, "There shall never enter into it anything that defiles." "It shall be called the way of holiness," says Isaiah; "the unclean shall not pass over it." And will you tell us, in the face of all these texts, that man—corrupt, impure, defiled—as the best of us most surely is—shall pass the fiery judgment of our God and enter into the heavenly Jerusalem by simply trusting in the mercy of his Maker, without one single rag to cover his iniquities and hide his natural uncleanness? It cannot be! God's mercy and God's holiness must needs be reconciled, and you have not done this yet.

And have you never heard that God is a God of perfect justice, whose laws may not be broken without punishment, whose commandments must be fulfilled on pain of death? "All His ways are judgment," says the book of Deuteronomy; "a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He." "Justice and judgment are the habitation of Your throne," says David. "The just Lord is in the midst," says Zephaniah; "He will not do iniquity: every morning does He bring His judgment to light; He fails not." "Do not think that I have come to destroy the law or the prophets," said Jesus: "I have not come to destroy—but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Until heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law until all be fulfilled."

I cannot find that these verses have ever been declared useless; I cannot discover any place which says the law is now obsolete, and need not be fulfilled; and how, then, can I teach you that it is enough to look merely to God's mercy? I read of only two ways in the Bible: One is, to perfectly obey the whole law yourself; the other is, to trust in the perfect obedience of Christ. Show me, if you can, one single text which teaches that a man may be saved without the claims of the law having been satisfied. An earthly prince, indeed, may forgive and pass over men's transgressions—but God never changes. "Has He spoken, and shall He not make it good?" I tell you, then, God's mercy and God's justice must be reconciled; and this you have not done yet.

You must have the perfect righteousness of Christ to appear in, at the marriage supper of the Lamb. You would not say a murderer should be acquitted, because he said he was sorry and hoped to be forgiven; you must make some amends to justice and to holiness; you cannot shut your eyes against the plain declarations of the Bible. You must have some good reason to give, why you should not be judged for all your sins and backslidings; you must show some cause why the punishment threatened for breaking God's law is not to fall upon you; there must be satisfaction for your sins—or you will perish everlastingly.

You tell us fairly you are not what you should be—but you say that God is merciful. I answer you this will not stand before the Bible: the wages of sin is death, he who offends in one point is guilty of all. God loves you—but He will have His demands paid in full: your debt must be discharged by yourself or by someone else; choose which you please—but one thing at least is certain—payment must be made. God is indeed all love: He wills not the death of any sinner—but, however small your iniquities may be, they cannot possibly be put away until the claims of His law have been satisfied to the uttermost farthing. By some means, then, you must have righteousness—or else it is clear you cannot be saved.

II. I promised in the second place to show you that **we have *no* righteousness of our own—and therefore by ourselves we cannot be saved.** I trust I need not dwell upon this point long, and therefore I shall only say a few words to enforce it on your notice.

Look at the **law of God**, and measure its requirements. Does it not ask of every man a perfect, unsinning obedience from first to last, in thought and word and deed, without one single failure in the slightest jot or tittle? And where is the son or daughter of Adam who can say, "All this I have performed"? Who is not conscious of a daily falling short in everything he does? I do not speak so much of thieves and liars and adulterers and drunkards and the like—for these are walking towards hell, leaning on Satan's arm. I speak rather of those who do not live in gross vices. I would even take the case of the best Christian among ourselves, and ask him if he can name a single day on which he has not sinned in many things. Oh, how much he would tell you of wandering in his prayers, of defilement in his thoughts, of coldness toward God, of lack of love, of pride, of evil tempers, of vanity, of worldly-mindedness! And all, remember, in the heart of one of those few who are traveling in the narrow way which leads unto life. And how shall we then believe, though all the world persuade us to the contrary, that man can ever purchase his acceptance in the sight of God? So true are the words of that

clear-sighted witness the apostle Paul, "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh living be justified."

But here I take occasion to answer the reasoning of those Pharisees, who would have men believe they can assist in the work of salvation by their own performances. They cannot submit to the idea that we are naturally so helpless, and so they go about to establish their own righteousness, and this in a variety of ways.

Some tell us that **repentance** and **amendments** will enable us to stand in the great day—but the Bible does not warrant it. No doubt, without them none of you will enter into the kingdom of heaven. But your amendments cannot put away your sins nor endure the severity of God's judgment; they cannot open that strait gate which must be passed before you get into the narrow way, although they may lead you up to it; they cannot blot out one single page of that black book in which your iniquities are written. John Baptist preached repentance—but he never told his hearers it would save them.

Some say they put their trust in **well-spent lives**: they never did anybody any harm; they have always done their best, and so they hope they shall be accounted righteous. Beloved, this is miserable trifling. Let them tell us of a single day in which they have not broken that spiritual law laid down in the Sermon on the Mount. What! Never thought an unkind thought? Never had an unchaste look? Never said an uncharitable thing? Never coveted? Oh, that tenth commandment: how utterly it seems neglected! And yet, in God's eyes, it goes along with murder and adultery. Or let them tell us of a single hour in which they have not left undone something it was in their power to do; and this must be accounted for. They cannot do it; they are silent; and yet these things are written plainly in the Bible. Is it not clear, then, that they do not read the Scriptures—or neglect their precepts if they do, and so, at any rate, they are not doing their best?

Some tell us that they hope **sincerity** will carry them safe through their trial. They may not perhaps have quite clear views—but still they have always meant well, and so they hope to be accepted. I cannot find there is any place for them in heaven. I read in the book of Kings that the priests of Baal called on their God for half a day, and cut themselves after their manner with knives, until the blood gushed out upon them. That was sincerity at any rate, and yet, a few hours after, Elijah commanded them to be put to death as soul-destroying idolaters. I read that Paul himself, before conversion, was zealous toward God: he thought within himself he ought to do many things contrary to Jesus of Nazareth, and shut up many of the saints in prison, and was exceedingly mad against them. Here was sincerity and earnestness; and yet we find him saying, when his eyes were opened: "I was a blasphemer and a persecutor, and injurious. . . . I am the least of the apostles, the chief of sinners . . . . I am not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God." And so it seems a man may be in earnest, and yet going towards the eternal place of torment.

Lastly, some tell us that they go through all the **forms and ordinances of religion**, and build their claim to righteousness on that. "Has not God commanded us," they say, "to honor His word, His house, His ministers, His sacraments?" All this we do, and surely He will accept us. I cannot find it written. But I do remember that the Jews had ceremonies and observances in abundance; and I have found many passages which seem to show that men may pay attention to these things, and yet be abominable in the sight of God. Hear the judgment of Samuel: "Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry."

Listen to the voice of Isaiah—Hear the word of the Lord, you rulers of Sodom! Listen to the instruction of our God, you people of Gomorrah! "What are all your sacrifices to Me?" asks the Lord. "I have had enough of burnt offerings and rams and the fat of well-fed cattle; I have no desire for the blood of bulls, lambs, or male goats. When you come to appear before Me, who requires this from you—this trampling of My courts? Stop bringing useless offerings. I despise your incense. New Moons and Sabbaths, and the calling of solemn assemblies—I cannot stand iniquity with a festival. I hate your New Moons and prescribed festivals. They have become a burden to Me; I am tired of putting up with them. When you lift up your hands in prayer, I will refuse to look at you; even if you offer countless prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are covered with blood. "Wash yourselves. Cleanse yourselves. Remove your evil deeds from My sight. Stop doing evil." (Isaiah 1:10-16)

"I spoke not to your fathers," says the Lord by Jeremiah, "concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices: but this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be my people: and walk you in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well with you."

I trust it will not seem to you unprofitable to have taken up so much time in exposing these delusions. In one way it is very useful. They all show that conscience tells every man he must have something wherewith to appear before God. Now, I wish to show you plainly that we have no perfect righteousness of our own; the doctrine may seem hard and disagreeable, and yet there are few who do not allow it at one important period in their lives, if they never did before. I mean the hour of death. Mark then how anxious almost everyone becomes, whom God permits to keep possession of his senses. The judgment day appears then in its true light. Man feels naked and empty. He knows he is about to be asked that solemn question, "What have you to say, why you should not perish for this long list of sins?" and if he has not furnished himself with the only answer that can be given, the view before his eyes cannot possibly look anything else than dreary, black, and hopeless. Ask those who have been brought to death's door by sickness, whether this be not true, and they will tell you.

In short, both Scripture and your own experience prove most fully that nothing we can do will stand God's holy and just examination. Our repentance, good works and services, all necessary and useful in themselves, are so tainted, so infected and imperfect, that they cannot justify us. We have no righteousness of our own, and therefore by ourselves we cannot be saved. "We are all as an unclean thing," says Isaiah, "and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away."

III. "But what are we to do?" perhaps you will ask. "You seem to have shut us up without hope. You told us first that we must have a perfect righteousness; and now you have told us further that we have no righteousness of our own. What are we to do? Which way are we to turn? What would you have us say? To whom are we to look?" Praised be God, beloved, I am not obliged to leave you here. I will not lead you into the wilderness and terrify you, and then point out no path towards the heavenly Canaan. I promised in the third place to tell you **how God can be a just God—and yet show mercy and justify the most ungodly?** And this is all contained in the words of my text, "The Lord" must be "our righteousness."

I show you here a mystery of wisdom and of love. The Lord Jesus Christ has **done** what we ought to have done—and **suffered** what we ought to have suffered. He has taken our place and become our substitute both in life and death, and all for the sake of miserable, corrupt, ungrateful beings like ourselves. Oh, is not His name then rightly called, "The Lord our Righteousness"?

Beloved, I ought to dwell upon this point. It is so highly important to have a clear view of it, and Satan does so much to prevent your seeing it distinctly, that I must try to unfold it before your eyes, that all of you may be able to understand what a minister means when he urges you to trust in the Lord Jesus as your righteousness.

Consider now: there were two things to be done before guilty man could be saved. The law was to be fulfilled, for we had all come short of it; justice was to be satisfied, for we had all deserved punishment. And how was this effected? Hearken! The Lord Jesus Christ, pitying our lost estate, covenanted and engaged to become our surety and substitute; and when the fullness of time was come, He left the bosom of His Father and took upon Him the form of a servant here on earth, being born of the Virgin Mary. In that form, by a sinless obedience to the whole law, He wrought out and brought in a perfect and everlasting righteousness. And this He is both willing and ready to bestow on all who will put their trust in Him. And more than this: to complete the mighty work, He consented to offer up Himself in our place as a victim to the wrath of God, to suffer instead of us, to bear that punishment which we had deserved—and this He did by dying on the cross. It was there He satisfied the claims of justice. It was there He paid the heavy debt written against our names. It was there that God the Father laid upon Him the iniquity of us all, and made His soul a sacrifice for sin. It was there that He redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us. Here, then, you see the plan of salvation which is offered to all the world. The believing sinner's guilt is taken away and laid upon Christ, for He has bore our transgressions. And all the merit of Christ's life and death, and all the value of His sufferings, are then made over to the sinner.

But see how great and glorious is this exchange between Jesus and our souls: the Father sees us now as members of His dear Son, in whom He is well pleased; He deals with us as if we had never sinned, as if we had ourselves fulfilled all righteousness; He looks on us as one with Christ, and acknowledges us as dear children and heirs of eternal glory. Do I say more than Scripture warrants? I think not. Listen to Paul: "God has made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." Are not these words strong? But so it is. "Christ was accounted as a sinner, and therefore punished for us. We are accounted as righteous, and therefore glorified in Him. He was accounted as a sinner, and therefore He was condemned. We are accounted as righteous in Him, and therefore justified." (Beveridge) God's law has been satisfied, and now we may be saved. Sin has been punished, and now sinners may go free. God has shown Himself a just God, and yet He can be the Savior of guilty men.

Beloved, are not these things wonderful? Are not these glad tidings to the laboring and heavy laden? The Lord Himself is our righteousness. Who is there among you that is groaning under the burden of sin, trembling under a sense of innumerable transgressions? Fear not—but come to Jesus; He has paid your debt in full; believe, and you shall be free. Who is there among you that is tried with manifold temptations—slipping, stumbling, walking in darkness and seeing no light, and often ready to say with David, "I shall one day perish!" Fear not—but look to Jesus; He has secured your entrance into heaven; He has fought and won the battle for you. The Lord is our righteousness. This shall be our defense and plea—when earth and its works are burned up, and the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and the Chief Shepherd shall appear to judge the sons of men.

Who shall lay anything *then* to the charge of those who have laid hold on Christ? Shall anyone presume to say they have not done everything required? The Lord, we will answer, is our righteousness; He is our substitute; we have done nothing—but He has done everything; He is our all in all. And who is he that can condemn us? shall death or hell or Satan lay a finger on us, and dare to say that justice has not been satisfied? The Lord, we will answer, is our righteousness; we have indeed sinned—but Christ has suffered; we have deserved wrath—but Jesus has died and shed His blood to make atonement in our stead. "Blessed," says holy David, "is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord," says Isaiah; "my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation. He has covered me with the robe of righteousness—as a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels."

Now, I have preached to very little purpose, beloved, if you do not this very morning ask yourselves, "Is the Lord my righteousness—or is He not?" Remember this mighty gift is offered unto all—but it is only placed upon those who believe. "Faith is the only hand which puts on Christ to justification. Christ is the only garment which can cover your defiled nature, and present you blameless in the sight of God. Without this faith it is clear you have neither part nor portion in this righteousness." (Hooker) I know not that I can put into your heads a more important inquiry; and yet, I sadly fear too many of you will not think I am in earnest—or else you will suppose the question may be useful to your neighbors—but not so very necessary for yourself.

Indeed, I am persuaded there are many people in every congregation who flatter themselves they are in a kind of middle path. They do not, to be sure, pretend they are in the number of the godly people—but they would be very sorry to be thought ungodly. They have a great respect for religion, and some time or other they intend to take it up more seriously—perhaps when they are married and have a home of their own (so the young say)—or when they have not so many cares or so much trouble about their families and their relations—or when they get on in years (so the middle-aged say)—or by-and-by—or when they become ill (so the old and grey-headed say). But in the meantime, they live on and move forward in a comfortable state of mind, take all the promises of God and all the smooth parts of a sermon to themselves, and leave the addresses to the unconverted and the careless for others.

But, once for all, I say to such people—your middle path seems right in your own eyes—but I have searched the Scriptures, and I cannot find it. I cannot meet with more than two descriptions of character: I read of a broad way, and I read of a narrow way; I read of converted men, and unconverted men; I read of heaven, and I read of hell; I read of those who are in Christ, and I read of those who are not in Christ. But nowhere can I find that road in which you put your trust—and I do not hesitate to say you will find it in the end to be nothing better than a piece of that broad way that leads to destruction. Think not I wish to hurt your feelings—but I do wish to awaken you, to convince you of the folly of this sleepy, half-and-half religion, and to show you the necessity of being decided and in earnest on the side of Christ, if you would not be lost forever.

I say this much by way of warning, and I now repeat to every man, woman and child here present, the plain question: "Is the Lord your righteousness—or is He not?" I know that there are here, two parties. One would reply, if honest, "I fear He is not"; and the other would answer, "I trust He is." I purpose, therefore, to conclude this sermon by a few words to each of these two classes.

First, then, I shall offer some counsel to those among you who say: "The Lord Jesus is, we trust, our righteousness." I say then, and I think it safe to do so—You have made a good profession. But I would have you daily search and see that you are not deceiving yourselves. See that your tongue does not lay claim to more than your heart has received and knows of; see that your life and lips are thoroughly agreed. Show all the world that He in whom you trust is your example no less than your righteousness; and while you wait for His second appearing endeavor daily to become more like Him. Study to be holy, even as He who has called you and washed you in His own blood is holy. Let not the righteousness of the Lord be evil-spoken of through you; let not Jesus be wounded in the house of His friends. Think of His love; let that constrain you to obedience—having much forgiven, love much. Beware that you give the Lord's enemies no occasion to blaspheme. They are watching you much; you cannot be hidden. Be always saying to yourself, "What shall I do, and how shall I behave, to show my gratitude to Him who has carried my sins and given me His righteousness?"

But know you for a certainty, if the world says "What do these people do, more than others?" if those who live with you cannot take knowledge of you that you are much with Jesus; if you have no fruit to show of any sort; if you are not habitually and daily sober, just, holy, temperate, humble, meek, loving, watchful, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord, hungering and thirsting after righteousness; if you have none of these things, you are little better than sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal, you are ruining your own soul, and in the day of judgment you will plead in vain the name of Jesus. The Lord will say, "I know you not; you never really came to me; I cannot see my seal upon your forehead, of which my servant Paul spake—Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity." "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

It only remains now to speak to all among you who cannot say "The Lord is my righteousness." Indeed, beloved, I am distressed for your condition. I cannot understand, I never can, what arguments you use to quench the striving of God's Spirit, to stop the piercings of your own conscience. In truth, I do suspect you never argue, you never reason; you shut your eyes and try to forget your own perishing souls. But don't you know that verse of the Bible which declares "the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all those who forget God,"—not ridicule—or insult—but simply all who forget. And don't you know the verse "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" It does not say abuse—or disbelieve—or deny—but simply "neglect," and this, I fear, is a charge you cannot turn aside.

Oh, think of **death**—it may be near at hand. Your careless indifference will alter then—but without Christ you will find a sting in that hour which no power of your own will ever remove. Think of **eternity** in **hell**—no merry companions, no comfortable gossiping, no noisy revelling at night, nothing but unchanging misery, unceasing torment, and unutterable woe. Think of your **judgment**—your name will be called in turn, and you will stand in the sight of assembled millions—ministers, father, mother, wife, children, relations, all will see you—you will have to give account of your actions, and you know that you will be condemned. But who will then pass sentence? Not an angel, not even God the Father—but the Lord Himself (Oh! cutting and heartrending thought)—the Lord Jesus, whose blood and righteousness you now refuse, will pronounce your condemnation.

These things perhaps sound dreadful; perhaps they may be treated with ridicule—but the day is at hand which will bring everyone to their senses, and make everybody sober—and you will then find that they are true. Knowing, therefore, the terrors of the Lord, let me persuade you to close with the gracious invitation of your Savior, and never rest until you can say from your hearts, "The Lord is my righteousness."

I know not anything that should prevent your salvation if you are willing and obedient. I cannot see in what respect your happiness on earth would be diminished. You are discontented with yourself, and I offer in the name of Christ—joy, pardon, and peace. You are poor, and I offer unsearchable riches. You are naked, and I offer you a spotless robe in which you shall sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb, and never be cast you out.

But mark, I will not promise you anything beyond today. "Now is the accepted time." Thus far I can go—but one step further I cannot proceed upon sure ground. If you reject the counsel of God now, I cannot promise even the youngest of you another opportunity. Before tomorrow your 'long home' may be fixed unalterably; tomorrow death may interfere—or Jesus may return to judgment, and it would be too late.

Go home, then, if you value your soul—and turn the words of the text into a prayer, and entreat the Lord to receive you and become your righteousness.

Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly into every heart. Amen and Amen.

I Have Something to Say to You

by J. C. Ryle

Jesus answered him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." Luke 7:40

Reader, I do not know who you are. I know not whether you are old or young, rich or poor, learned or unlearned. I only know that you are a child of Adam, and have a soul to be lost or saved. And therefore I say, "hear me! I have somewhat to say unto you!" Reader, I have four things to say, and they shall soon be said. The Lord make them words in season to your soul.

I. Firstly, I have a word of WISHES AND DESIRES for every one into whose hands these pages may fall. I tell you it is my heart's desire and prayer to God for you, that you may be saved. I want you to be convinced of your sinfulness in the sight of God, to feel your need of a Savior, to know Christ by faith, and to have eternal life in Him. I wish you to be one who knows his own lost condition by nature, his own corruption, guilt, and danger of eternal ruin, his need of a righteousness far better than his own, wherein to appear before God at the day of judgment. I wish you to be one who actually applies to Christ for peace, and casts the burden of his soul upon Him, who believes on Him for forgiveness, who trusts Him for deliverance from all transgression, and forsaking all other hopes and confidence, draws from Him all his comfort and strength. I wish you to be one who lives by faith, stands by faith, walks by

faith, who receives with the heart that grand truth, "He who believes on Jesus is not condemned," and rests securely upon it. This faith is the only principle that produces inward peace and real holiness. This is the faith that sanctifies a man, "that purifies the heart, that overcomes the world, that works by love, that brings forth fruit. He who has this faith is born of God and an heir of glory. He who has it not, is not of God, knows little of true vital Christianity now, and will be lost forever hereafter.

Reader, my best desire is that you may be a new creature in Christ Jesus—led by the spirit of God—conformed to your Master's likeness, and not unto the world—loving, much, because much forgiven—having communion with the Father and the Son—one with Christ and Christ in you. Then I should feel that you were safe—safe, though the Lord should come in glory, and heaven and earth be dissolved, and the elements molt with fervent heat—safe, because ready for every condition. Judge for yourself, can I feel that for all who profess and call themselves Christians? Then I should feel that you were truly happy; happy, because the springs of your happiness would be in heaven and never dry—happy, because your peace would be that blessed peace which the world can neither give nor take away. Judge for yourself, can I feel that for all who profess and call themselves Christians? Reader, I make no secret of my wishes, whatever you may think of them. God is my witness, these are my wishes, these are my desires for everybody.

II. Secondly, I have a word of SORROWFUL WARNING for some into whose hands these pages will fall. Some of you know in your own hearts and consciences—though I could say it weeping—you know well, that you are not walking with God. You, to whom I now speak, know well that God's ways are not your ways—that although you profess and call yourselves Christians, your hearts are not right in His sight. You have no heart-felt hatred for sin. You have no heart-felt love for God's commandments. You have no delight in God's word. You have no pleasure in the company of His people. His day is a weariness to you. His service is a burden. His ordinances are not precious to your soul. Your first and best thoughts are given to the life that now is—you spend but the wreck and remnant of them on the life to come. Your treasure is on earth and not in heaven. Your affections are set on things below, and not on things above. Your friendship is with the world, and not with God. Oh! reader, what has the Lord God done to you that you should treat Him in this fashion? What can the world do for you, that you should love it better than Christ? Would the world die for you? No! but Jesus did. Can the world put away your sins? No! Jesus alone can. Does the world give true peace in this life? No! but Jesus does. Will the world give comfort in death? No! but Jesus will. Can the world help you in the day of judgment? No! No! none can help you then but Christ!

Reader, what will you do when God rises up, except you alter? when He visits, what will you answer Him, except you change? Do you not know that whatever a man sows he shall also reap? He that sows to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; He only that sows to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life eternal. The world you think so much of now passes away. He only that does the will of God abides forever. But God, our Savior, still loves you. God is not willing that any one should perish. He sends you by my mouth a message of peace this day. Turn from the broad way and come unto Christ while there is yet time. Turn before the fountain is sealed, now open for sin and uncleanness—before the Father's house is closed forever, and not one more allowed to enter—before the Spirit and the Bride cease to invite. Be wise, repent, return, and come.

Reader, you cannot prevent my grieving over you, although you maybe at ease yourself. God; is my witness, this day I have given you a warning!

III. Thirdly, I have a word of QUICKENING for all true believers, into whose hands this tract may fall. Believing reader, I trust I may say of you, you love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Know then that I want you to be a bright and shining light to those around you. I want you to be such a plain epistle of Christ, that all may read something of God on the face of your conversation. I want you so to live that all may see that you are one of the people of Jesus, and thus to glorify your Father which is in heaven. Alas! I say it with shame, we many of us bring little glory to the Lord who bought us; we are far from walking worthy of our vocation. How weak is our faith! How fleeting our sorrow for sin! How faint our self-denial! How soon spent our patience! How thin and thread-bare our humility! How formal our prayers! How cold our love!

We are called God's witnesses, but truly our witness is often little better than silence—it is but an uncertain sound. We are called the light of the world, but we are—many of us—poor, glimmering sparks, that can only just be seen. We are called the salt of the earth, but we scarcely do anything to make our savor felt and known. We are called pilgrims and strangers, but those who observe us might sometimes think this world was our only home. Often, too often, we prove to be one thing in name, and another in reality—high in our professions, but low in our practice—giants in our resolutions, but infants in our actions—angels and spiritual in our talking, heathen, or little better, in our doing—goodly, like Naphtali, in our words—unstable, like Reuben, in our works. Oh! believing reader, these things ought not so to be.

We must not be content with a low measure of holiness. We must not rest satisfied with a little sanctification. We must not think it is enough, because we have attained a small degree of grace, and are just one step better than the world. No! indeed, we must go forward from strength to strength. We must shine more and more unto the perfect day. We must strive to bear much fruit. Christ did not give Himself to us that we should be a sleeping generation—trees that grow not—always standing still. He would have us be 'a peculiar people, zealous of good works—valiant for the truth—fervent in spirit—living not unto ourselves, but unto Him. Freely saved, we should freely and willingly labor. Freely forgiven, we should freely and cheerfully work. Freely redeemed from more than Egyptian bondage, we should count it a pleasure and a privilege to serve the Lord. Our lives should be books of evidences. Our acts should tell out whose we are. "You are my friends," said Jesus, "if you do whatever I command you."

Brother or sister, what are you doing in the world? Where is the proof of your growth in grace? Are you awake, or are you asleep? Are there no tempers you might keep under more strictly? Is there no sort of besetting sin you are shamefully sparing? Is there no time you might employ more usefully? Is there no kind of selfishness you are secretly indulging? Is there no good you have the means of doing, and leave undone? Are there no daily habits you might alter for the better? Are there no spots upon your spiritual garments which you never seek to have washed out? Are there no friends and relations you are letting alone in their sins? Oh! that you may deal more honestly with yourself than you have done hitherto! The Lord is at hand.

Brother or sister, look within. Take heed lest a deceitful heart, and an ensnaring world, and a busy devil, turn you out of the way. Study a tender conscience. Beware of indolence under the cloak of false humility. Make not the old Adam, and the devil, an excuse for little sins. Let the least things of your daily life be done well—like the shekel of the sanctuary, let them be good measure—let them be even more than full weight. Remember the Apostle's advice, "Watch, stand fast in the faith, be courageous like men, be strong." (1

Cor. xvi. 13.) Those who follow the Lord fully are those that follow Him most comfortably. Be zealous though the world may sleep. Brother or sister, I give you this word of quickening in love. I would not have you be the least in the kingdom of heaven. I would not like you to be the palest and dimmest among the stars in glory. I want you not only to be scarcely saved, and so as by fire, but to receive a full reward. Then lay these things well to heart.

IV. Fourthly, I have words of ADVICE for every one that desires to be a real Christian. One part of my advice is this—"Search the Scriptures." They only are able to make you wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus. They are the truth of God. They must be fulfilled. They cannot be broken. And yet they are the book which many have, and very few read. Reader, beware lest an unread Bible be an awful witness against you at tho last day. If you would have your soul saved, read the Bible. If you would not be always wavering and carried about by every wind of doctrine, read the Bible. Read it regularly. Read it all. Be a Bible-reading Christian, whatever the world may say. Make time for this, whatever others may do. Remember my advice. If you would not lose your own soul, read the Bible.

Another piece of advice is this—"Pray without ceasing." Prayer is the only way by which man can approach God. Prayer is the only messenger we can send to tell God what we want; and if we would have good things for our souls, we must ask for them. *Prayer opens the treasuries of God's mercies like a key*; if we ask, we shall receive. Prayer is the means that every one can use if he will—and yet for all this many people never pray.

Reader, beware lest your neglect of prayer should prove your condemnation. If Jesus is to save you, you must pray. If your sins are to be forgiven, you must pray. If the spirit is to dwell in your heart, you must pray. If you are to have strength against sin, you must pray. If you are to dwell with God in heaven, your heart must talk with God upon earth by prayer. Oh! do not be a prayerless Christian, whatever others may think right. Begin to pray this day if you never prayed before. Remember if you and I are to meet each other with joy at Christ's appearing, you must pray.

Another piece of advice is this—"Attend regularly on the means of grace." Go to some place of worship where the Gospel is preached. Faith comes by hearing. Those who never hear are never likely to believe the Gospel. Reader, beware lest you are ruined forever by neglecting the means which God has appointed for your salvation. Alas! it does not need to be a murderer, or an adulterer, or a thief, or a liar, in order to be in the way to hell. You have only to sit still, to do nothing, to profane the Sabbath, to refuse to listen to instruction, and in hell you will find yourself at last. Oh! do not let this be your end. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Walk in the road where Jesus loves to walk, and who can tell but He will one day make you one of His believing people.

Reader, I commend these things to your special notice. I know they are worth thinking over. The Lord grant if you never thought of them before, that you may go on thinking, thinking, thinking about them until your soul is saved. The Lord grant, if you have thought of them, that you may think of them more and more every year you live. The more you think of them the happier you will be.

I remain, your affectionate friend,
J. C. Ryle

Give Yourself Wholly to Them

by J. C. Ryle, 1859

"Give yourself wholly to them." 1 Timothy 4:15

When the Apostle says, "Give yourself wholly to these things," he seems to look at the "things" of which he had been speaking in the preceding verses, beginning with the words, "Set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity." We have here a target set before the ministers of the New Testament, at which we are all to aim—and of which we must all feel we fall short. Yet it is an old saying, "He who aims high is the most likely to strike high; and he who shoots at the moon will shoot further than the man who shoots at the bush."

The Apostle appears to me to suggest that the minister must be a man of one thing: to use his own words, a "man of God." We hear of men of business, and men of pleasure, and men of science. The aim of the minister should be, to be "a man of God;" or to employ a phrase used in some countries, to be "Jesus Christ's man." This should be the aim which we should place before us; we should seek to be "every inch the minister of Jesus Christ." We should aim to be the same men at all times, in all positions, and places; not on Sunday only, but on week days also; not merely in the pulpit, but everywhere—in our living rooms, and in the house of the poor man.

There are those, of whom their congregations have said, that *when they were in the pulpit—they were so good, that never wished them to come out; and when they went out of the pulpit—they were so bsd, they never wished them to go in!* May God give us all grace to take that to heart! May we seek so to live, so to preach, so to work, so to give ourselves wholly to the business of our calling, that this bitter remark may never be made about us.

Our profession is a very special one. Others have their seasons of relaxation, when they can completely lay aside their work. This can never be done by the faithful minister of Jesus Christ. Once put on, his office must never be put off. At home, abroad, relaxing, going to the sea side—he must always carry his business with him. A great lawyer could say of his official robes, "Lie there, Lord Chancellor." Such ought never to be the mind of the minister of Christ.

There are some things which the high demand of this text suggests, as needful to be followed after and practiced.

1. First, it demands ENTIRE DEVOTION to the great work to which we are ordained. When one was commanded by the Savior to follow Him, he replied, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father;" but then there came that solemn saying, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God." Still another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back

and say good-by to my family;" and to him there came the remarkable sentence, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back, is fit for service in the kingdom of God." "Do not greet anyone on the road," was Christ's charge to the seventy disciples. Surely these Scriptural expressions teach us, that in all our dealings in our ministry, we must have a high standard. We must strive to be men of one thing—that thing being the work of Jesus Christ.

2. Secondly, it demands a thorough separation from the things of the WORLD. I hold it to be of the greatest importance to keep the ministerial office, so far as we can, distinct and separate from everything that is secular. I trust we shall hear every year of fewer and fewer ministers of the Gospel who are magistrates, and fewer and fewer ministers who take part in agricultural meetings, and win prizes for fat pigs, enormous bulls, and large crops of turnips. There is no apostolical succession in such occupations.

Nor yet is this all. We should be separated from the *pleasures* of the world—as well as from its *business*. There are many innocent and indifferent amusements, for which the minister of Christ ought to have no time. He ought to say, "I have no time for these things! I am doing a great work—and I cannot come down!"

3. Thirdly, it demands a jealous watchfulness over our own SOCIAL conduct. We ought not to be always paying social functions, and dining out, as others do. It will not do to say, that our Lord went to a marriage feast, and sat at supper in the Pharisee's house, and therefore we may do the same. I only reply—Let us go in His spirit, with His faithfulness and boldness, to say a word in season, and to give the conversation a profitable turn—and then we may go with safety! Unless we do this, we should be careful where we go, with whom we sit down, and where we spend our evenings.

There was a quaint saying of John Wesley to his ministers, which contains the germ of much truth. "Don't aim at being thought gentlemen; you have no more to do with being gentlemen, than with being masters at dancing." Our aim should be not to be regarded as agreeable persons at the dinner table—but to be known everywhere as faithful, consistent ministers of Jesus Christ!

4. Fourthly, it demands a diligent redemption of TIME. We should give attention to reading, every day that we live. We should strive to bring all our reading to bear on our work. We ought to keep our eyes open continually, and be ever picking up ideas for our sermons—as we travel by the way, as we sit by the fireside, as we are standing on the platform at the railway station. We should be keeping in our mind's eye our Master's business—observing, noting, looking out, gathering up something that will throw fresh light on our work, and enable us to put the truth in a more striking way. He who looks out for something to learn will always be able to learn something.

Having suggested these things, I will next proceed to ask, **What will be the CONSEQUENCE of our giving ourselves wholly to these things?** Remember, we shall not receive the praise of men. We shall be thought extreme, and ascetic, and over-righteous. Those who want to serve God and serve money at the same time, will think our standard too high, our practice too stringent. They will say, that we are going too far and too fast for a world such as that in which we live. May we never care what men say of us, so long as we walk in the light of God's Word! May we strive and pray to be wholly independent of, and indifferent to man's opinion, so long as we please God! May we remember the woe pronounced by our Master, when He said, "Woe to you when all men speak well of you," and the words of Paul, "If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ."

Though by "giving ourselves wholly to these things" we shall not win the praise of *men*—we shall attain the far more important end of *usefulness to souls*. I completely acknowledge the doctrine of the sovereignty of God in the salvation of sinners. I acknowledge that those who preach best, and live nearest to God, have not always been honored in their lives to the saving of many souls. But still, the man who is most entirely and wholly Jesus Christ's man—a man of one thing, who lives Sunday and weekday, everywhere, at home and abroad, as a man whose single endeavor is to give himself to the work of Jesus Christ—this is the man, this is the minister, who will generally, in the long run, do the most good.

The case of Mr. Simeon will apply here. You all know how he was persecuted when he began to testify for Christ, in Cambridge. You know how many there were who would not speak to him, how the finger of scorn was pointed at him continually. But we know how he went on persevering in the work, and how, when he died, all Cambridge came forth to give him honor, and how heads of houses, and fellows of colleges, and men who had scoffed at him while he lived, honored him at his death. They testified, that the life he had lived had had its effect, and that they had seen and known that God was with him.

I once saw in Dundee one who had known much of that godly man, Robert Murray McCheyne. She told me that those who read his letters and sermons had a very faint idea of what he was. She said to me, "If you have read all his works, you just know nothing at all about him. You must have seen the man, and heard him, and known him, and have been in company with him—to know what a man of God he was."

Furthermore, giving ourselves wholly to these things will bring happiness and peace to our consciences. I speak now among friends, and not among worldly people, where I should need to fence and guard and explain what I mean. I shall not be suspected of holding justification by works by those I see before me. I speak of such a clear conscience as the Apostle refers to. We trust we have a "clear conscience" (Hebrews 13:18). To have this clear conscience is clearly bound up with high aims, high motives, a high standard of ministerial life, and practice. I am quite sure, that the more we give ourselves wholly to the work of the ministry, the more inward happiness, the greater sense of the light of God's countenance, are we likely to enjoy.

The subject is a deeply humbling one. Who does not feel, "My weakness, my weakness! my unprofitableness! How far short I come of this high standard?" What reason have we, having received mercy, not to faint! What reason have we, having been spared by God's great patience, to abound in the work of the Lord, and to give ourselves wholly to our business! The great secret is—to *be always looking to Jesus, and living a life of close communion with Him!*

At Cambridge, the other day, I saw a picture of Henry Martyn, bequeathed by Mr. Simeon to the public library. A friend informed me that that picture used to hang in Mr. Simeon's room, and that when he was disposed to trifle in the work of the ministry, he used to stand before it and say, "It seems to say to me, Charles Simeon, don't trifle, don't trifle; Charles Simeon, remember whose you are, and whom you serve." And then the worthy man, in his own strange way, would bow respectfully, and say, "I will not trifle, I will not trifle; I will not forget."

May we, in conclusion, look to a far higher pattern than any man—Martyn, McCheyne, or any other. May we look to the Great Chief Shepherd, the great pattern, in whose steps we are to walk! May we abide in Him, and never trifle! May we hold on our way, looking to Jesus, keeping clear of the world, its pleasures, and its follies—caring nothing for the world's frowns, and not much moved by the world's smiles—looking forward to that day when the Great Shepherd shall give to all who have done His work, and preached His Gospel, a crown of glory that does not fade away! The more we have the mind of Christ, the more we shall understand what it is to "give ourselves wholly to these things."

Apostolic Fears

by J. C. Ryle

"I am *afraid* that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ." 2 Corinthians 11:3

The text which heads this page, contains one part of the experience of a very famous Christian. No servant of Christ perhaps has left such a mark for good on the world, as the Apostle Paul. When he was born, the whole Roman Empire, excepting one little corner, was sunk in the darkest heathenism; when he died the mighty fabric of heathenism was shaken to its very center and ready to fall. And none of the agents whom God used to produce this marvelous change did more than Saul of Tarsus, after his conversion. Yet even in the midst of his successes and usefulness we find him crying out, "I am afraid."

There is a melancholy ring about these words which demands our attention. They show a man of many cares and anxieties. He who supposes that Paul lived a life of ease, because he was a chosen Apostle, worked miracles, founded Churches, and wrote inspired Epistles—has yet much to learn. Nothing can be more unlike the truth! The eleventh chapter of the second Epistle to the Corinthians tells a very different tale. It is a chapter which deserves attentive study. Partly from the opposition of the heathen philosophers and priests, whose craft was in danger—partly from the bitter hatred of his own unbelieving countrymen—partly from false or weak brethren—partly from his own thorn in the flesh—the great Apostle of the Gentiles was like his Master—"a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering" (Isaiah 53:3).

But of all the burdens which Paul had to carry, none seems to have weighed him down so much as that to which he refers, when he writes to the Corinthians, "my concern for all the churches" (2 Corinthians 11:28). The scanty knowledge of many early Christians, their weak faith, their shallow experience, their dim hope, their low standard of holiness—all these things made them peculiarly liable to be led astray by false teachers, and to depart from the faith. Like little children, hardly able to walk, they required to be treated with immense patience. Like exotic plants in a hothouse, they had to be watched with incessant care. Can we doubt that they kept their Apostolic founder in a state of constant tender concern? Can we wonder that he says to the Colossians, "How much I am struggling for you," and to the Galatians, "I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel." "You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you?" (Colossians 2:1; Galatians 1:6; 3:1).

No attentive reader can study the Epistles without seeing this subject repeatedly cropping up. And the text I have placed at the head of this paper is a sample of what I mean: "I am *afraid* that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ." That text contains three important lessons, which I wish to press on the attention of all my readers. I believe in my conscience they are lessons for the times.

I. First, the text shows us a spiritual "disease to which we are all susceptible, and which we ought to fear." That disease is corruption of our minds: "I am afraid your minds may somehow be led astray."

II. Secondly, the text shows us an "example which we ought to remember, as a beacon:" "Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning."

III. Thirdly, the text shows us "a point about which we ought to be especially on our guard." That point is being led astray "from sincere and pure devotion to Christ."

The text is a deep mine, and is not without difficulty. But let us go down into it boldly, and we shall find it contains much precious metal.

I. First, then, there is "a spiritual disease, which we ought to fear:" "Minds that are led astray."

I take "Minds that are led astray" to mean injury of our minds by the reception of false and unscriptural doctrines in religion. And I believe the sense of the Apostle to be, "I am afraid that your minds would partake of erroneous and unsound views about Christianity. I am afraid that you should receive as truths, principles which are not the truth. I am afraid that you would depart from the faith once delivered to the saints, and embrace views which are intrinsically destructive of the Gospel of Christ."

The fear expressed by the Apostle is painfully instructive, and at first sight, may create surprise. Who would have thought that under the very eyes of Christ's own chosen disciples—while the blood of Calvary was hardly yet dry, while the age of miracles had not yet passed away—who would have thought that in a day like this there was any danger of Christians departing from the faith? Yet nothing is more certain than that "the secret power of lawlessness" began already to work before the Apostles were dead (2 Thessalonians 2:7). "Even now," says John, "Many antichrists have come" (1 John 2:18). And no fact in Church history is more clearly proved than this—that false doctrine has never ceased to be the plague of Christendom for the last eighteen centuries.

Looking forward with the eye of a prophet, Paul might well say "I am afraid:" "I am not only afraid of the corruption of your morals, but of your minds." The plain truth is that "false doctrine" has been the chosen device which Satan has employed in every age to stop the progress of the Gospel of Christ. Finding himself unable to prevent the Fountain of Life from being *opened*, he has labored incessantly to *poison* the streams which flow from it. If he could not destroy it, he has too often neutralized its usefulness by addition, subtraction, or substitution. In a word he has "led astray men's minds."

(a) False doctrine soon spread throughout the Early Church after the death of the Apostles, despite what some may wish

to say of the Early Church's purity. Partly by strange teaching about the Trinity and the Person of Christ, partly by an absurd multiplication of newfangled rituals, partly by the introduction of monasticism and a man-made asceticism, the light of the Church was soon dimmed and its usefulness destroyed. Even in Augustine's time rituals grew to such a number that the state of the church was in a worse case concerning this matter than were the Jews. Here was the leading astray of men's minds.

(b) False doctrine in the middle ages so completely spread throughout the Church, that the truth as it is in Jesus was nearly buried or drowned. During the last three centuries before the Reformation, it is probable that very few Christians in Europe could have answered the question, "What must I do to be saved?" Popes and Cardinals, Archbishops and Bishops, Priests and Deacons, Monks and Nuns, were, with a few rare exceptions, steeped in ignorance and superstition. They were sunk into a deep sleep, from which they were only partially roused by the earthquake of the Reformation. Here, again, was the leading astray of men's minds.

(c) False doctrine, since the days of the Reformation, has continually been rising up again, and marring the work which the Reformers began. Neologianism in some districts of Europe, Socinianism in others, formalism and indifferentism in others, have withered blossoms which once promised to bear good fruit, and made Protestantism a mere barren form. Here, again, has been the "leading astray of the mind."

(d) False doctrine, even in our own day and under our own eyes, is eating out the heart of the Church and endangering her existence. One school of professors does not hesitate to avow its dislike to the principles of the Reformation, and travels over the sea and the land to Romanize the Establishment. Another school, with equal boldness, speaks lightly of inspiration, sneers at the very idea of a supernatural religion, and tries hard to cast overboard miracles as being useless extra weight. Another school proclaims liberty to every shade and form of religious opinion, and tells us that all teachers are equally deserving our confidence, however heterogeneous and contradictory their opinions—so long as they are only clever, earnest, and sincere. To each and all the same remark applies. They illustrate the "leading astray of men's minds." In the face of such facts as these, we may well remember the words of the Apostle in the text which heads the paper. Like him we have abundant cause to feel afraid. Never, I think, was there such need for English Christians to stand on their guard. Never was there such need for faithful ministers to proclaim a loud warning. "If the trumpet does not sound a clear call, who will get ready for battle?" (1 Corinthians 14:8).

I charge every loyal member of the Church to open his eyes to the peril in which his own Church stands, and to beware lest it is damaged through apathy and a morbid love of peace. Controversy is an odious thing; but there are days when it is a positive element. Peace is an excellent thing; but, like gold, it may be gotten too dear. Unity is a mighty blessing; but it is worthless if it is purchased at the cost of truth. Once more I say, Open your eyes and be on your guard!

The nation that rests satisfied with its commercial prosperity, and neglects its national defenses, because they are troublesome or expensive, is likely to become a prey to the first Napoleon, who chooses to attack it. The Church which is "rich; and has acquired wealth," may think it, "does not need a thing," because of its antiquity, traditions, and endowments. It may cry "Peace, peace," and flatter itself that it sees no evil. But if it is not careful about the maintenance of sound doctrine among its ministers and members, it may be surprised someday when its light is taken away.

I denounce, from the bottom of my heart, despondency or cowardice at this crisis. All I say is, let us exercise a godly fear. I do not see the slightest necessity for forsaking the old ship, and giving it up for lost. Bad as things look inside our ark, they are not one bit better outside. But I do protest against that careless spirit of slumber which seems to seal the eyes of many Christians, and to blind them to the enormous peril in which we are placed by the rise and progress of false doctrine in these days. I protest against the common notion so often proclaimed by men in high places, that "unity" is of more importance than sound doctrine, and peace more valuable than *truth*. I call on every reader who really loves the Church to recognize the dangers of the times, and to do his duty, courageously and energetically, in resisting them by united action and by prayer. Let us not forget Paul's words, "Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be men of courage; be strong" (1 Corinthians 16:13).

Our noble Reformers bought the truth at the price of their own blood, and handed it down to us. Let us be careful that we do not cheaply sell it for some bread and stew, under the seeming names of unity and peace.

II. Secondly, the text shows us an "example we ought to remember, as a beacon:" "Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning."

I need hardly remind my readers that Paul in this place refers to the story of the fall in the third chapter of Genesis, as a simple historical fact. He does not afford the least appearance to the modern notion that the book of Genesis is nothing more than a pleasing collection of myths and fables. He does not hint that there is no such being as the devil, and that there was not any literal eating of the forbidden fruit, and that it was not really in this way that sin entered into the world. On the contrary, he narrates the story of the third chapter of Genesis as a truthful history of a thing that really took place.

You should remember, also, that this reference does not stand alone. It is a noteworthy fact that several of the most remarkable histories and miracles of the Pentateuch are expressly mentioned in the New Testament, and always as historical facts. Cain and Abel, Noah's ark, the destruction of Sodom, Esau's selling his birthright, the destruction of the first-born in Egypt, the passage of the Red Sea, the brazen serpent, the manna, the water flowing from the rock, Balaam's donkey speaking—all these things are named by the writers of the New Testament, and named as matters of fact and not as fables. Let that never be forgotten.

Those who are fond of pouring contempt on Old Testament miracles, and making light of the authority of the Pentateuch, would do well to consider whether they know better than our Lord Jesus Christ and the Apostles. To my mind, to talk of Genesis as a collection of myths and fables, in the face of such a text of Scripture as we have before us in this paper, is unreasonable and profane. Was Paul mistaken or not, when he narrated the story of the temptation and the fall? If he was, he was a weak-minded naive person, and may have been mistaken on fifty other subjects. At this rate, that would be the end of all his authority as a writer! From such a monstrous conclusion we may well turn away with scorn. But it is well to remember that much infidelity begins with irreverent contempt of the Old Testament.

The point, after all, which the Apostle would have us mark in the history of Eve's fall, is the "cunning" with which the devil led her

into sin. He did not tell her flatly that he wished to deceive her and do her harm. On the contrary, he told her that the thing forbidden was a thing that "was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom" (Genesis 3:6). He did not hesitate to assert that she could eat the forbidden fruit and yet "not die." He blinded her eyes to the sinfulness and danger of sin. He persuaded her to believe that to depart from God's plain command was for her benefit and not for her ruin. In short, "he deceived her by his cunningness."

Now this "cunningness," Paul tells us, is precisely what we have to fear in false doctrine. We are not to expect it to approach our minds in the garment of error, but in the form of truth. Counterfeit money would never become currency if it did not appear like the real thing. The wolf would seldom get into the fold, if he did not enter it in sheep's clothing. Catholicism and liberalism would do little harm if they went about the world under their true names. Satan is far too wise a general, to manage a campaign in such a fashion as this. He employs fine words and high-sounding phrases, such as "Catholicity, Apostolicity, Unity, Church order, sound Church views, Ecumenicalism, free thought, broad sense, kindly judgment, liberal interpretation of Scripture," and the like, and thus effects a lodging place in unwary minds. And this is precisely the "cunningness" which Paul refers to in the text.

We need not doubt that he had read his Master's solemn words in the Sermon on the mount: "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves!" (Matthew 7:15). I ask your special attention to this point. Such is the naivety of many Christians in this day, that they actually expect false doctrine to look false, and will not understand that the very essence of its mischievousness, as a rule, is its resemblance to God's truth. A young Christian, for instance, brought up from his cradle to hear nothing but Evangelical teaching, is suddenly invited some day to hear a sermon preached by some eminent teacher of semi-Catholic, or semi-skeptical opinions. He goes into the church, expecting in his simplicity to hear nothing but heresy from the beginning to the end. To his amazement he hears a clever, eloquent sermon, containing a vast amount of truth, and only a few drops of error. Too often a violent reaction takes place in his unsuspicious mind. He begins to think his former teachers were narrow, and uncharitable, and his confidence in them is shaken, perhaps forever. Too often, it ends with his entire perversion, and at last he is enrolled in the ranks of the Legalist, Ritualists, or the liberals! And what is the history of the whole case? Why, a foolish forgetfulness of the lesson Paul puts forward in this text.

"As Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning," so Satan charms unwary souls in the our century by approaching them under the garb of truth. I beg every reader of this paper to remember this part of my subject, and to stand on his guard. What is more common than to hear it said of some false teacher in this day, "He is so good, so devoted, so kind, so zealous, so laborious, so humble, so self-denying, so charitable, so earnest, so fervent, so clever, so evidently sincere—there can be no danger and no harm in hearing him. Besides he preaches such a real Gospel: no one can preach a better sermon than he does sometimes! I never can and never will believe he is unsound." Who does not hear continually such talk as this? What discerning eye can fail to see that Christians expect unsound teachers to be open vendors of poison, and cannot realize that they often appear as "angels of light," and are far too wise to be always saying all they think, and showing their whole hand and mind. But so it is. Never was it so needful to remember the words, "Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning."

I leave this part of my subject with the sorrowful remark that we have fallen upon times when suspicion on the subject of sound doctrine is not only a duty—but a virtue. It is not the avowed Pharisee and Sadducee that we have to fear, but the *leaven* of the Pharisees and Sadducees. It is the "show of wisdom" with which Ritualism is invested, that makes it so dangerous to many minds (Colossians 2:23). It seems so good, and fair, and zealous, and holy, and reverential, and devout, and kind, that it carries away many well-meaning people like a flood. He who would be safe, must cultivate the spirit of a sentinel at a critical post. He must not mind being laughed at and ridiculed, as one who "has a keen nose for heresy." In days like these he must not be ashamed to suspect danger. And if anyone scoffs at him for doing so, he may well be content to reply, "Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning."

III. The third and last lesson of the text remains yet to be considered. It shows us **"a point about which we ought to be especially on our guard." That point is being led astray from "Sincere and pure devotion to Christ."**

Now the expression before us is somewhat remarkable, and stands alone in the New Testament. One thing at any rate is abundantly clear: the words "sincere and pure" means that which is single and unmixed, in contradistinction to that which is mixed and double. Following out that idea, some have held that the expression means "singleness of affection towards Christ;" we are to fear lest we should divide our affections between Christ and any other. This is no doubt very good theology; but I question whether it is the true sense of the text. I prefer the opinion that the expression means the simple, unmixed, unadulterated, unaltered doctrine of Christ—the simple "truth as it is in Jesus," on all points—without addition, subtraction, or substitution. Departure from the simple genuine prescription of the Gospel, either by leaving out any part or adding any part, was the thing Paul would have the Corinthians especially to fear.

The expression is full of meaning, and seems especially written for our learning in these last days. We are to be ever jealously on our guard, lest we depart from and corrupt the simple Gospel which Christ once delivered to the saints.

The expression before us is exceedingly instructive. The principle it contains is of unspeakable importance. If we love our souls and would keep them in a healthy state, we must endeavor to adhere closely to the simple doctrine of Christ—in every jot, tittle, and particular. Once we add to it or take away anything from it, and we risk spoiling the Divine medicine, and may even turn it into poison. Let your ruling principle be, "No other doctrine but that of Christ, nothing less, and nothing more!" Lay firm hold on that principle, and never let it go. Write it on the tablet of your heart, and never forget it!

(1) Let us settle it, for example, firmly in our minds, that there is "no way of peace with God" but the simple way marked out by Christ. True rest of conscience and inward peace of soul will never come from anything but direct faith in Christ Himself and His finished work. Peace by confession to a priest, or bodily asceticism, or incessant attendance at Church services, or frequent reception of the Communion as a ritual—is a delusion and a snare! It is only by coming straight to Jesus Himself, laboring and heavy laden, and by believing, trusting communion with Him, that souls find rest. In this matter let us stand firm in "sincere and pure devotion to Christ."

(2) Let us settle it next in our minds that there is "no other priest" who can be in any way a mediator between yourself and God but Jesus Christ. He Himself has said, and His word shall not pass away, "No one comes to the Father—except

through me" (John 14:6). No sinful child of Adam, whatever be his office, and however high his ecclesiastical title—can ever occupy Christ's place, or do what Christ alone is appointed to do. The priesthood is Christ's peculiar office, and it is one which He has never delegated to another. In this matter also let us stand firm in "sincere and pure devotion to Christ."

(3) Let us settle it next in our minds that there is "no sacrifice for sin" except the one sacrifice of Christ upon the cross. Do not listen for a moment to those who tell you that there is any sacrifice in the Lord's Supper, any repetition of Christ's offering on the cross, or any oblation of His body and blood, under the form of *consecrated bread and wine*. The one sacrifice for sins which Christ offered was a perfect and complete sacrifice, and it is nothing short of blasphemy to attempt to repeat it. "By one sacrifice he has made perfect forever, those who are being made holy" (Hebrews 10:14). In this matter also let us stand firm in the "sincere and pure devotion to Christ."

(4) Let us settle it next in our minds that there is "no other rule of faith, and judge of controversies," but that simple one to which Christ always referred—the written Word of God. Let no man disturb our souls by such vague expressions as "the voice of the Church, primitive antiquity, the judgment of the early Fathers," and the like tall talk. Let our only standard of truth be the Bible, God's Word written. "What does the Scripture say?" "What is written?" "To the law and to the testimony!" "Diligently study the Scriptures." (Romans 4:3; Luke 10:26; Isaiah 8:20; John 5:39). In this matter also let us stand firm in the "sincere and pure devotion to Christ."

(5) Let us settle it next in our minds that there are "no other means of grace" in the Church which have any binding authority, except those well known and simple ones which Christ and the Apostles have sanctioned. Let us regard with a jealous suspicion all ceremonies and forms of man's invention, when they are invested with such exaggerated importance as to thrust into the background God's own appointments. It is the invariable tendency of man's inventions, to supersede God's ordinances. Let us beware of making the Word of God of no effect, by human devices. In this matter also let us stand firm in the "sincere and pure devotion to Christ."

(6) Let us settle it next in our minds that "no teaching about the Ordinances" is sound, which gives them a power of which Christ says nothing. Let us beware of admitting that either baptism or the Lord's Supper can confer grace "ex opere opere operato," that is, by their mere outward administration, independently of the state of heart of those who receive them. Let us remember that the only proof that baptized people and communicants have grace—is the *exhibition* of grace in their lives. The *fruits* of the Spirit are the only evidences that we are born of the Spirit and one with Christ, and not the mere reception of the Ordinances. In this matter also let us stand firm in the "sincere and pure devotion to Christ."

(7) Let us settle it next in our minds that "no teaching about the Holy Spirit" is safe which cannot be reconciled with the simple teaching of Christ. They are not to be heard who assert that the Holy Spirit actually dwells in all baptized people, without exception, by virtue of their baptism, and that this grace within such people only needs to be "stirred up." The simple teaching of our Lord is, that He dwells only in those who are His believing disciples, and that "the world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him" (John 14:17). His indwelling is the special privilege of Christ's people, and where He *is*—He will be *seen*. On this point also let us stand firm in the "sincere and pure devotion to Christ."

(8) Finally let us settle it in our minds that no teaching can be thoroughly sound, in which truth is not set forth in "the *proportion* of Christ and the Apostles." Let us beware of any teaching in which the main thing is an incessant exaltation of the Church, the ministry, or the ordinances, while such grand truths as repentance, faith, conversion, holiness, are comparatively left in a subordinate and inferior place. Place such teaching side by side with the teaching of the Gospels, Acts, and Epistles. Count up texts. Make a calculation. Mark how "comparatively" little is said in the New Testament about baptism, the Lord's Supper, the Church, and the ministry; and then judge for yourself what is the proportion of truth. In this matter also, I say once more, let us stand firm in the "sincere and pure devotion to Christ."

The simple doctrine and rule of Christ then—nothing added, nothing taken away, nothing substituted—this is the mark at which we ought to aim. This is the point from which departure ought to be dreaded. Can we improve on His teaching? Are we wiser than He? Can we suppose that He left anything of real vital importance unwritten, or liable to the vague reports of human traditions? Shall we take on ourselves to say that we can mend or change for the better any ordinance of His appointment? Can we doubt that in matters about which He is silent—we have need to act very cautiously, very gently, very moderately, and must beware of pressing them on those who do not see with our eyes? Above all we must beware of asserting anything to be needful to salvation of which Christ has said nothing at all? I only see one answer to such questions as these. We must beware of anything which has even the appearance of departure from the "sincere and pure devotion to Christ."

The plain truth is—that we cannot sufficiently exalt the Lord Jesus Christ as the great Head of the Church, and Lord of all ordinances, no less than as the Savior of sinners. I take it we all fail here. We do not realize how high and great and glorious a King the Son of God is, and what undivided loyalty we owe to One who has not delegated any of His offices, or given His glory to another. The solemn words which John Owen addressed to the House of Commons, in a sermon on the "Greatness of Christ," deserve to be remembered. I fear the House of Commons hears few such sermons in the present day.

Christ is the "Way"—men without Him are Cains, wanderers, vagabonds. He is the "Truth"—men without Him are liars, like the devil of old. He is the "Life"—men without Him are dead in trespasses and sins. He is the "Light"—men without Him are in darkness, and do not know where they go. He is the "Vine"—men that are not in Him are withered branches prepared for the fire. He is the "Rock"—men not built on Him are carried away with a flood. He is the "Alpha and Omega," the first and the last, the founder and finisher of our salvation. Oh, blessed Jesus, how much better it would be not to exist than to exist without You! Never to be born than not to die in You! A thousand hells is nothing compared to eternally without Jesus Christ!" This witness is true. If we can say Amen to the spirit of this passage—it will be well with our souls.

And now let me *conclude* this paper by offering a few parting words of **COUNSEL** to any one into whose hands it may fall. I offer them not as one who has any authority, but one who is affectionately desirous to do good to his brethren. I offer them especially to all Christians. And I offer them as counsels which I find helpful to my own soul, and as such I venture to think they will be helpful to others.

(1) In the first place, if we would be kept from falling into false doctrine, "let us arm our minds with a thorough knowledge of God's Word." Let us read our Bibles from beginning to end with daily diligence, and constant prayer for the teaching of the Holy Spirit, and so strive to become thoroughly familiar with their contents**. Ignorance of the Bible is the root of all error**, and a superficial acquaintance with it accounts for many of the sad perversions and defections of the present day. In a hurrying age of travel and communication, I am firmly persuaded that many Christians do not give time enough to private reading of the Scriptures. I believe seriously that English people knew their Bibles better two hundred years ago than they do now. The consequence is, that they are "tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching," and fall an easy prey to the first clever teacher of error who tries to influence their minds. I entreat my readers to remember this counsel, and take heed to their ways.

It is as true now as ever, that the person who is versed in, or adheres strictly to, the text of the Bible, is the only good theologian, and that a familiarity with great Scriptures, is, as our Lord proved in the temptation, one of the best safeguards against error. Arm yourself then, with the sword of the Spirit—and let your hand become used to it. I am well aware that there is no royal road to Bible-knowledge. Without diligence and pains no one ever becomes "mighty in the Scriptures." "Justification," said Charles Simeon, with his characteristic quaintness, "is by faith, but knowledge of the Bible comes by works," But of one thing I am certain: there is no labor which will be so richly repaid as laborious regular daily study of God's Word.

(2) The second and last counsel which I venture to offer is this. "Let us make ourselves thoroughly acquainted with the history of the Reformation." My reason for offering this counsel is my firm conviction that this highly important part of history has of late years been undeservedly neglected. Thousands of Christians nowadays have a most inadequate notion of the amount of our debt to our martyred Reformers. They have no distinct conception of the state of darkness and superstition in which our fathers lived, and of the light and liberty which the Reformation brought in. And the consequence is that they see no great harm in the Roman Catholic movement of the present day, and have very indistinct ideas of the real nature and work of Catholicism. It is high time that a better state of things should begin.

Of one thing I am thoroughly convinced: a vast amount of the prevailing apathy about the Romanizing movement of the day may be traced up to gross ignorance, both of the true nature of Catholicism and of the Protestant Reformation. *Ignorance, after all, is one of the best friends of false doctrine*. More Scriptural light is one of the great needs of the day, even in our century. Thousands are led astray by Catholicism or infidelity, from sheer lack of reading and information. Once more I repeat, if men would only study with attention the Bible and the History of the Reformation, I should have little fear of their "minds being led astray from their sincere and pure devotion to Christ."

Gospel Treasures!

by J. C. Ryle

I am sure this paper will be read by some one who feels that his sins are not yet forgiven. Reader, are you that man?

My heart's desire and prayer to God is that you may seek forgiveness without delay. There is forgiveness in Jesus Christ for every one that is willing to receive it. There is every encouragement that your soul can need, to confess your sins and lay hold on this forgiveness this very day.

Reader, listen to me while I try to exhibit to you the treasure of Gospel forgiveness. I cannot describe its fullness as I ought. Its riches are indeed unsearchable (Eph. iii. 8). But if you will turn away from it you shall not be able to say in the day judgment, you did not at all know what it was.

Consider, then, for one thing, that the forgiveness set before you is**a great and broad forgiveness**. Hear what the Prince of Peace Himself declares: "All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies with which soever they shall blaspheme" (Mark iii. 28); "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall become as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isaiah i. 18). Yes! though your trespasses be more in number than the hairs of your head, the stars in heaven, the leaves of the forest, the blades of grass, the grains of sand on the sea shore, still they can all be pardoned. As the waters of Noah's flood covered over and hid the tops of the highest hills, so can the blood of Jesus cover over and hide your mightiest sins. "His blood cleanses from all sin" (1 John i. 7). Though to you they seem written with the point of a diamond, they can all be effaced from the book of God's remembrance by that precious blood. Paul names a long list of abominations which the Corinthians had committed, and then says: "Such were some of you: but you are washed" (1 Cor. vi. 11).

Furthermore, it is **a full and complete forgiveness**. It is not like David's pardon to Absalom—a permission to return home, but not a full restoration to favor (2 Sam. xiv. 24). It is not, as some fancy, a mere letting off, and letting alone. It is a pardon so complete, that he who has it is reckoned as righteous as if he had never sinned at all. His iniquities are blotted out. They are removed from him as far as the east from the west (Psalm ciii. 12). There remains no condemnation for him. The Father sees him joined to Christ, and is well pleased. The Son beholds him clothed with His own righteousness, and says, "You are all fair, . . . there is no spot in you" (Cant. iv. 7). Blessed be God that it is so. I verily believe if the best of us all had only one blot left for himself to wipe out, he would miss eternal life. If the holiest child of Adam were in heaven all but his little finger, and to get in depended on himself, I am sure he would never enter the kingdom. If Noah, Daniel, and Job had had but one day's sin to wash away, they would never have been saved. Praised be God that in the matter of our pardon there is nothing left for man to do. Jesus does all, and man has only to hold out an empty hand and to receive.

Furthermore, it is **a free and unconditional forgiveness**. It is not burdened with an "if," like Solomon's pardon to Adonijah: "If he will show himself a worthy man (1 Kings i. 52). Nor yet are you obliged to carry a price in your hand, or bring a character with you to

prove yourself deserving of mercy. Jesus requires but one character, and that is that you should feel yourself a sinful, bad man. He invites you to "buy wine and milk without money and without price," and declares, "Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Isaiah lv. 1; Rev xxii. 17) Like David in the cave of Adullam, He receives everyone that feels in distress and a debtor, and rejects none (1 Sam. xxii. 2). Are you a sinner? Do you want a Savior? Then come to Jesus just as you are, and your soul shall live.

Again, it is **an offered forgiveness**. I have read of earthly kings who knew not how to show mercy—of Henry the Eighth of England, who spared neither man nor woman; of James the Fifth of Scotland, who would never show favor to a Douglas. The King of kings is not like them. He calls on man to come to Him, and be pardoned. "Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice is to the sons of men" (Prov. viii. 4). "Ho, every one that thists, come you to the waters" (Isaiah iv. 1) "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink" (John vii. 37). "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. xi. 28). Oh, reader, it ought to be a great comfort to you and me to hear of any pardon at all; but to hear Jesus Himself inviting us, to see Jesus Himself holding out His hand to us—the Savior seeking the sinner before the sinner seeks the Savior—this is encouragement, this is strong consolation indeed!

Again, it is **a willing forgiveness**. I have heard of pardons granted in reply to long entreaty, and wrung out by much importunity. King Edward the Third of England would not spare the citizens of Calais until they came to him with halters round their necks, and his own Queen interceded for them on her knees. But Jesus is "good and ready to forgive" (Psalm lxxxvi. 5). He delights in mercy (Micah vii.18) Judgment is His *strange* work. He is not willing that any should perish (2 Peter iii. 9). He would sincerely have all men saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. ii. 4) He wept over unbelieving Jerusalem. "As I live;" He says, "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked. Turn, turn, from your evil ways: why will you die?" (Ezek. xxxiii. 11). Ah, reader, you and I may well come boldly to the throne of grace! He who sits there is far more willing and ready to give mercy than you and I are to receive it.

Besides this, it is **a tried forgiveness**. Thousands and tens of thousands have sought for pardon at the mercy-seat of Christ, and not one has ever returned to say that he sought in vain; sinners of every name and nation—sinners of every sort and description, have knocked at the door of the fold, and none have ever been refused admission. Zaccheus the extortioner, Magdalene the harlot, Saul the persecutor, Peter the denier of his Lord, the Jews who crucified the Prince of Life, the idolatrous Athenians, the adulterous Corinthians, the ignorant Africans, the bloodthirsty New Zealanders—all have ventured their souls on Christ's promises of pardon, and none have ever found them fail. Ah, reader, if the way I set before you were a new and untraveled way, you might well feel faint-hearted! But it is not so. It is an old path. It is a path worn by the feet of many pilgrims, and a path in which the footsteps are all one way. The treasury of Christ's mercies has never been found empty. The well of living waters has never proved dry.

Beside this, it is **a present forgiveness**. All who believe in Jesus are at once justified from all things (Acts xiii. 38). The very day the younger son returned to his father's house he was clothed with the best robe, had the ring put on his hand, and shoes on his feet (Luke xv.). The very day Zaccheus received Jesus he heard these comfortable words "This day is salvation come to this house" (Luke xix. 9). The very day that David said, "I have sinned against the Lord," he was told by Nathan, "The Lord has also put away your sin" (2 Sam. xii. 13). The very day you first flee to Christ, your sins are all removed. Your pardon is not a thing far away, to be obtained only after many years. It is near at hand. It is close to you, within your reach, all ready to be bestowed. Believe, and that very moment it is your own. "He who believes is not condemned" (John iii. 18). It is not said, "he shall not be," or "will not be," but "is not." From the time of his believing, condemnation is gone. "He that believes has everlasting life" (John iii. 36). It is not said, "he shall have," or "will have," it is "has" It is his own as surely as if he was in heaven, though not so evidently so to his own eyes. Ah, reader, you must not think forgiveness will be nearer to a believer in the day of judgment than it was in the hour he first believed! His complete salvation from the power of sin is every year nearer and nearer to him; but as to his forgiveness and justification, it is a finished work from the very minute he first commits himself to Christ.

Last, and best of all, it is **an everlasting forgiveness**. It is not like Shimei's pardon, a pardon that may sometime be revoked and taken away (1 Kings ii. 9). Once justified you are justified forever. Once written down in the book of life, your name shall never be blotted out. The sins of God's children are said to be cast into the depths of the sea—to be sought for and not found—to be remembered no more—to be cast behind God's back (Mic. vii. 19; Jer. 1. 20; xxxi. 34; Isaiah xxxviii. 17). Some people fancy they may be justified one year and condemned another—children of adoption at one time and strangers by and by—heirs of the kingdom in the beginning of their days, and yet servants of the devil in their end. I cannot find this in the Bible. As the New Zealander told the Romish priest, "I do not see it in the Book." It seems to me to overturn the good news of the Gospel altogether, and to tear up its comforts by the roots. I believe the salvation Jesus offers is an everlasting salvation, and a pardon once sealed with His blood shall never be reversed.

Reader, I have set before you the nature of the forgiveness offered to you. I have told you but little of it, for my words are weaker than my will. The half of it remains untold. The greatness of it is far more than any report of mine. But I think I have said enough to show you it is worth the seeking, and I can wish you nothing better than that you may strive to make it your own.

Not Corrupting the Word

by J. C. Ryle, 1858

"Unlike so many, we do not peddle the word of God for profit. On the contrary, in Christ we speak before God with sincerity, like men sent from God." 2 Corinthians 2:17

It is no light matter to speak to any assembly of immortal souls about the things of God. But the most serious of all responsibilities is, to speak to a gathering of ministers, such as that which I now see before me. The awful feeling will come across my mind, that one single word said wrong, sinking into some heart, and bearing fruit at some future time, in some pulpit, may lead to harm, of which we cannot know the extent. But there are occasions when true humility is to be seen, not so much in loud professions of our weakness, as in forgetting ourselves altogether. I desire to forget *self* at this time, in turning my attention to this portion of Scripture. If I say little about my own sense of insufficiency, do me the justice to believe, that it is not because I am not well aware of it.

The Greek expression, which we have translated, "peddle," either means a tradesman who does his business dishonestly, or a wine

maker, who adulterates the wine which he offers for sale. Tyndale renders it, "We are not of those who chop and change the Word of God." Another version of the Bible says, "We are not as many, who adulterate the Word of God." In our margin we read, "We are not as many, who deal deceitfully with the Word of God."

In the construction of the sentence, the Holy Spirit has inspired Paul to use both the negative and the positive way of stating the truth. This mode of construction adds clearness and unmistakableness to the meaning of the words, and intensity and strength to the assertion, which they contain. It will be found, therefore, that there are contained in the text both negative and positive lessons for the instruction of the ministers of Christ. Some things we ought to **avoid**. Others we ought to **follow**.

The first of the negative lessons is, a plain warning against corrupting or dealing deceitfully with the Word of God. The Apostle says, *"Unlike so many"* who do it, pointing out to us that even in his time there were those who did not deal faithfully and honestly with God's truth. Here is a complete answer to those who assert that the early Church was one of unmixed purity. The mystery of iniquity had already begun to work. The lesson which we are taught is—to beware of all dishonest statements of that Word of God, which we are commissioned to preach. We are to add nothing to it. We are to take nothing away.

When can it be said of us, that we corrupt the Word of God in the present day? What are the rocks and reefs which we ought to avoid, if we would not be of the "many" who deal deceitfully with God's truth? A few suggestions on this would be useful.

1. We corrupt the Word of God most dangerously, when we throw any doubt on the absolute inspiration of any part of Holy Scripture. This is not merely corrupting the *cup*—but the whole *fountain*! This is not merely corrupting the *bucket* of living water, which we profess to present to our people, but poisoning the whole *well*. Once wrong on this point, the whole substance of our religion is in danger. It is a flaw in the foundation. It is a worm at the root of our theology. Once we allow this worm to gnaw the root, then we will not be surprised if the branches, the leaves, and the fruit, decay little by little. The whole subject of the *inspiration of Scripture*, I am well aware, is surrounded with difficulty. All I would say is, that, in my humble judgment, notwithstanding some difficulties which we may not be able now to solve, the only safe and tenable ground to maintain is this—that every chapter, and every verse, and every word in the Bible has been "given by the inspiration of God."

We should never desert a great principle in theology, any more than in science, because of *apparent difficulties* which we are not able at present to remove.

Permit me to mention an illustration of this important axiom. Those conversant with astronomy know, that before the discovery of the planet Neptune there were difficulties, which greatly troubled the most scientific astronomers, respecting certain aberrations of the planet Uranus. These aberrations puzzled the minds of astronomers, and some of them suggested that they might possibly prove the whole Newtonian system to be untrue. But at that time a well-known French astronomer, named Leverrier, read before the Academy of Science a paper, in which he laid down this great axiom—that *it was wrong for a scientist to give up a principle, because of difficulties which could not be explained.* He said in effect, "We cannot explain the aberrations of Uranus now; but we may be sure that the Newtonian system will be proved to be right, sooner or later. Something may be discovered one day, which will prove that these aberrations may be accounted for, and the Newtonian system will remain true and unshaken." A few years later, the anxious eyes of astronomers discovered the last great planet, Neptune. The planet was shown to be the true cause of all the aberrations of Uranus; and what the French astronomer had laid down as a principle in science, was proved to be wise and true.

The application of the story is obvious. Let us beware of giving up any first principle in theology. Let us not give up the great principle of absolute inspiration because of difficulties. The day may come when they will all be solved. In the mean time, we may rest assured that the difficulties which beset any other theory of inspiration, are ten times greater than any which beset our own.

2. Secondly, we corrupt the Word of God when we make defective statements of doctrine. We do so when we add to the Bible—the opinions of the Church, or of the Church Fathers, as if they were of equal authority. We do so when we take away from the Bible, for the sake of pleasing men. We do so when from a feeling of false liberality, keep back any statement which seems narrow, and harsh, or hard. We do so when we try to soften down anything that is taught about eternal punishment, or the reality of hell. We do so when we bring forward doctrines in their wrong proportions. We all have our *favorite doctrines*, and our minds are so constituted that it is hard to see one truth very clearly without forgetting that there are other truths equally important. We must not forget the exhortation of Paul, to minister "according to the *proportion* of faith."

We do so when we exhibit an excessive concern to fence, and guard, and qualify such doctrines as justification by faith without the deeds of the law, for fear of the charge of antinomianism; or when we flinch from strong statements about holiness, for fear of being thought legal. We also do this when we shrink back from the use of Bible language in giving an account of doctrines. We are apt to keep back such expressions as "born again," "election," "adoption," "conversion," "assurance," and to use a roundabout phraseology, as if we were ashamed of plain Bible words. I cannot expand these statements because we are short of time. I am content with mentioning them and leave them to your private thought.

3. In the third place, we corrupt the Word of God when we make a defective practical application of it. We do so when we do not discriminate between classes in our congregations—when we address everyone as being possessed of grace, because of their baptism or church-membership, and do not draw the line between those who have the Spirit and those who have not. Are we not apt to keep back clear, direct appeals to the unconverted? When we have eighteen hundred or two thousand persons before our pulpits, a vast proportion of whom we must know are unconverted, are we not apt to say, "Now if there is any *one* of you who does not know the things that are necessary for eternal peace" — when we ought rather to say, "If there are any of you who has not received the grace of God?"

Are we not in danger of defective handling of the Word in our practical exhortations, by not bringing home the statements of the Bible to the various classes in our congregations? We speak plainly to the poor; but do we also speak plainly to the rich? Do we speak plainly in our dealings with the upper classes? This is a point on which, I fear, we need to search our consciences.

I now turn to the POSITIVE lessons which the text contains. "In Christ we speak before God with sincerity, like men sent from God." A few words on each point must suffice.

1. We should aim to speak "with sincerity." Sincerity of aim, heart, and motive; to speak as those who are thoroughly convinced of the truth of what they speak; as those who have a deep feeling and tender love for those whom we address.

2. We should aim to speak "like men sent from God." We ought to strive to feel like men commissioned to speak for God, and on His behalf. In our dread of running into Roman Catholicism, we too often forget the language of the Apostle, "I make much of my ministry." We forget how great is the responsibility of the New Testament minister, and how awful the sin of those who when a real messenger of Christ addresses them, refuse to receive his message, and harden their hearts against it.

3. We should aim to speak "before God." We are to ask ourselves, not, What did the people think of me? but, What was I in the sight of God? O that this may be the spirit in which we may always express from our pulpits—not caring whether men are pleased or displeased—not caring whether men say we were eloquent or feeble; but going away with the witness of our conscience—I have spoken as standing before God's sight.

4. Finally, we should aim to speak "as in Christ." The meaning of this phrase is doubtful. Grotius says, "We are to speak as in His name, as ambassadors." Beza says, "We are to speak about Christ, concerning Christ." This is good doctrine, but hardly the full meaning of the words. Others say, We are to speak as ourselves joined to Christ, as those who have received mercy from Christ, and whose only title to address others is from Christ alone. Others say, We should speak as through Christ, in the strength of Christ. No meaning, perhaps, is better than this. The expression in the Greek exactly answers to Philippians 4:13, "I can do everything through him who gives me strength." Whatever sense we ascribe to these words, one thing is clear: we should speak in Christ, as those who have themselves received mercy; as those who desire to exalt, not themselves, but the Savior; and as those who care nothing what men think of them, so long as Christ is magnified in their ministry.

In conclusion, we should all ask, Do we ever handle the Word of God deceitfully? Do we realize what it is to speak as of God, as in the sight of God, and in Christ?

Let me put to everyone one searching question—Is there any text in God's Word which we shrink from expounding? Is there any statement in the Bible which we avoid speaking about to our people, not because we do not understand it, but because it contradicts some pet notion of ours as to what is truth? If this is true, let us ask our consciences whether this is very much like handling the Word of God deceitfully. Is there anything in the Bible we keep back for fear of seeming harsh, and of giving offense to some of our hearers? Is there any statement, either doctrinal or practical, which we mangle, mutilate or dismember? If so, are we dealing honestly with God's Word? Let us pray to be kept from corrupting God's Word. Let neither fear nor the favor of man induce us to keep back, or avoid, or change, or mutilate, or qualify any text in the Bible. Surely we ought to have holy boldness when we speak as ambassadors of God. We have no reason to be ashamed of any statement we make in our pulpits, so long as it is Scriptural.

I have often thought that one great secret of the marvelous honor which God has put on a man who is not in our denomination (I allude to Mr. Charles Spurgeon) is, the extraordinary boldness and confidence with which he stands up in the pulpit to speak to people about their sins and their souls. It cannot be said he does it from fear of any, or to please any. He seems to give every class of hearers its portion—to the rich and the poor, the high and the low, the king and the peasant, the learned and the illiterate. He gives to every one the plain message, according to God's Word. I believe that very boldness has much to do with the success which God is pleased to give to his ministry. Let us not be ashamed to learn a lesson from him in this respect. Let us go and do likewise.

Unbelief—A Marvel

by J. C. Ryle

"He marveled at their unbelief." Mark 6:6

The text which heads this page is a very remarkable one. Of all the expressions in the four Gospels which show that the Lord Jesus Christ was very Man, none perhaps is more startling than this. That He who was born of the Virgin Mary, and had a body like our own, should hunger and thirst, and weep and rejoice, and be weary and suffer pain—all this we can, in some degree, understand. But that He who was truly God as well as truly Man, He "in whom dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily," He in whom were, "hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," He who "knew what was in man"—that He should "marvel" at anything here below, may well fill us with astonishment! But what says the Scripture? There it is written in plain words, which no ingenuity can explain away, *"He marveled at their unbelief."*

In handling this subject, I do not propose for a moment to discuss those deep and mysterious articles of the faith which lie at the foundation of Christianity. If I attempted this, I could add nothing to what masters of theology have already said and should probably leave the subject where I found it, if I did not "darken counsel by words without knowledge." What I wish to do is to say something practical about the general subject of **unbelief**. It must be an astonishingthing, if even our Lord Jesus Christ marveled at it. It must be an *important* thing, when we hear and read so much about it in the present day. And I shall try to make a few plain remarks upon it.

1. Let us consider the nature of unbelief. "What is it?"

2. Let us inquire why unbelief is so astonishing. "Why did the Lord Jesus marvel at it?"

1. The nature of unbelief. What is unbelief? The word so translated will be found twelve times in the New Testament and always, so far as I can see, in one signification. In its fullest sense, of course, it only exists in lands where men enjoy the light of revelation. In heathen lands, where there is little known, there can be comparatively little unbelief. It consists in not believing something which God has said—some *warning* that He gave—some *promise* that He held out—some *advice* that He offers—some *judgment* that He threatens—some *message* that He sends. In short, to refuse to admit the truth of God's revealed Word, and to live as if we did not

think that Word was to be depended on—is the essence of unbelief.

Unbelief is the *oldest* of the many spiritual diseases by which fallen human nature is afflicted. It began in the day when Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, and brought sin into the world. They did not believe what *God* had told them, would be the consequence of disobedience; and they did believe the *Tempter*, saying, "You shall not surely die."

Unbelief ruined millions in the day of Noah's flood: they would not believe the great "preacher of righteousness," when he warned them for a hundred and twenty years to flee from the wrath to come.

Unbelief slew myriads in the day when Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by fire from heaven. When righteous Lot called on his sons-in-law to escape for their lives, "he seemed as one who mocked." (Gen. 19.14.)

Unbelief kept Israel wandering forty years in the wilderness, until a whole generation was dead. We are expressly told, "They could not enter in—because of unbelief" (Heb. 3.19.)

Unbelief brought, finally, destruction on the Church and State of the Jews some fifty years after Christ left the world. They would not believe nor receive Him as the Messiah, but crucified and killed Him. The primary cause why Jerusalem was destroyed, the temple burned, and God's ancient people cast off and scattered over the face of the world—was unbelief.

Unbelief, we are taught everywhere in the New Testament, is the grand reason why multitudes of professing Christian men and women in every age are not saved, and die unprepared to meet God. lt bars the way to heaven, and makes God's glorious promises of mercy, useless and unavailing. "He who believes not, is condemned already." "He who believes not, shall be damned." "He who believes not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." "If you believe not that I am He, you shall die in your sins." (John 3.18, 36; Mark 16.16; John 8.24.)

Remember, everyone into whose hands this paper may fall—remember and never forget it—it is not so much heinous sin—as unbelief which ruins souls. "All manner of sins shall be forgiven to the men." "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin." "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made white as snow." (Matt. 12.31; 1 John 1.7; Isaiah 1.18.) But if a man will not put faith in Christ, he places himself out of the reach of mercy. I am bold to say, that even Judas Iscariot might have found absolution, if, after his denial, he had repented and believed. The true cause of eternal ruin is contained in those solemn words which our Master spoke before the Jewish Sanhedrin, "You will not come unto Me—that you might have life." (John 5.40.)

Unbelief is one of the *commonest* spiritual diseases in these latter days. It meets us at every turn, and in every company. Like the Egyptian plague of frogs, it makes its way into every family and home, and there seems no keeping it out. Among high and low, and rich and poor, in town and in country, in universities and manufacturing towns, in castles and in cottages, you will continually find some form of unbelief. It is no longer a pestilence which walks in darkness, but a destruction which wastes at noonday. *Unbelief* is even thought clever and intellectual, and a mark of a thoughtful mind. Society seems leavened with it. He who avows his belief of everything contained in the Bible, must make up his mind in many companies to be smiled at contemptuously, and thought an ignorant and weak man.

(a) With some, the seat of unbelief appears to be the **head**. They refuse to accept anything which they cannot understand. Inspiration, Miracles, the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Atonement, the Holy Spirit, the Resurrection, the Future State—all these mighty verities are viewed with cold indifference as *disputable* points, if not absolutely rejected. Can we entirely explain them? Can we satisfy their reasoning faculties about them? If not, they must be excused if they stand in doubt. What they cannot *fully understand*, they tell us they cannot *fully believe*.

(b) With some the seat of unbelief is the **heart**. They love the sins and habits of life, which the Bible condemns, and are determined not to give them up. They take refuge from an uneasy conscience by trying to persuade themselves that the old Book is not true. The measure of their creed—is their lusts. Whatever condemns their lusts—they refuse to believe. The famous Lord Rochester, once a profligate and an infidel, but at last a true penitent, is recorded to have said to Burnet, as he drew near his end, "It is not *reason*, but a *bad life* which is the great argument against the Bible." A true and weighty saying! Many, I am persuaded, profess that they do not believe, because they know, if they did believe—that they must give up their favorite sins!

(c) With far the greater number of people the seat of unbelief is a **lazy**, indolent will. They dislike all kind of trouble. Why should they deny themselves and take pains about Bible-reading and praying, and diligent watchfulness over thought and word and deed, when after all, it is not quite certain that the Bible is true? This I have little doubt, is the form of unbelief which prevails most frequently among young people. They are not agitated by intellectual difficulties. They are often not the slaves of any special lusts or passions, and live tolerably decent lives. But deep down in their hearts there is a disinclination to make up their minds, and to be decided about anything in religion. And so they *drift down the stream of life* like dead fish, and float helplessly on, and are tossed to and fro, hardly knowing what they believe. And while they would shrink from telling you they are not Christians, they are without any backbone in their Christianity.

In days like these, we must count it no strange thing if we meet with a vast amount of unbelief in the world. Rather, let us make up our minds to expect it, and to see it under the most specious and plausible aspects. To be *forewarned* is to be *forearmed*. No doubt it is startling, when a young man leaves some quiet secluded country home, and launches on the waves of this troublesome world in some busy town, to hear doctrines and principles denied, or sneered at, which he never dreamed of anyone questioning when he lived at home. But surely this is no more than his old Bible might have taught him to expect. Is it not written there, "There shall come in the last days scoffers?" "When the Son of man comes, shall He find faith on the earth?" (2 Peter 3. 3; Luke 18. 8;) Such a young man should say to himself calmly and quietly, "This unbelief is precisely what my father's Bible told me to expect. If I met with no unbelief, the old Book would not be true."

After all, it is some comfort to remember that there is probably less of real, downright, reasoning unbelief than there appears to be, Thousands, we may be sure, do not in their heart of hearts believe all that they say with their lips. Many a skeptical saying is nothing more than a borrowed article, picked up and retailed by him who says it, because it sounds clever, while in reality it is not the language of his inner man. *Sorrow, and sickness, and affliction, often bring out the strange fact that so-called sceptics are no sceptics*

at all, and that many talk scepticism merely from a desire to seem clever, and to win the temporary applause of clever men.

That there is an immense amount of unbelief in the present day I make no question; but that much of it is mere show and pretense, is to my mind as clear as noonday. No man, I think, can do pastoral work, and come to close quarters with souls, visit the sick, and attend the dying, without coming to that conclusion.

2. Let us now inquire WHY unbelief is so astonishing. What is there in unbelief, which made even the Lord Jesus, the Son of God marvel? No doubt there was something peculiar and extraordinary in the unbelief of the *Jews*. That the children of Israel, brought up from their infancy in the knowledge of the law and the prophets, trained from their earliest years to look for the Messiah, and to expect a mighty "prophet like unto Moses," taught to believe in the possibility of miracles, and familiar with the story of miracle-working men—that *they* should reject Jesus of Nazareth, and not be moved by the mighty works which He did among them —all this was truly astonishing and surprising! Astonishing that *they* should have such privileges—and yet make such a bad use of them! Astonishing that the door of life should be open, and heaven so near—and they should refuse to enter in!

But, I suspect, the Holy Spirit would have us look deeper than this. He would have us know that if we sit down and calmly consider unbelief, we cannot avoid the conclusion, that there is something singularly astonishing about it and never so much so as in these latter days of the world. Let me try to show what I mean.

(1) For one thing, unbelief is a spiritual disease peculiar to Adam's children. It is a habit of soul entirely confined to man. Angels in heaven above, and fallen spirits in hell beneath, saints waiting for the resurrection in paradise, lost sinners waiting for the last judgment in that awful place where the worm never dies, and the fire is not quenched—all these have one point in common—they all believe! The rich man in the parable, when he lifted up his eyes in torment, and asked for a drop of water to cool his tongue, and pleaded hard for his five brethren, had bid an eternal farewell to unbelief. "The very devils," says James, "believe and tremble." (James 2.19.) Hateful, and hating, and malicious, and murderous, and lying as Satan is called in Scripture, we read that his agents cried, "We know You who You are—the Holy One of God!" "Have You come to torment us before the time!" (Matthew 8. 29.)

But man, *living* man, is the only intelligent creature who is unbelieving! I say "*living* man" advisedly. Alas! What a *waking up* remains for many, the moment the last breath is drawn. *There is no unbelief in hell.* Voltaire now knows whether there is a sin-hating God; and David Hume now knows whether there is an endless hell. The infant of days, by merely dying, acquires a knowledge which the subtlest philosophers, while on earth, profess their inability to attain. The dead Hottentot knows more than the living Socrates. Surely a habit of soul so absolutely and entirely confined to "living man," may well be called astonishing.

(2) For another thing, unbelief is astonishing, when you consider its arrogance and presumption. For, after all how little the wisest of men know; and none are more ready to confess it than themselves. How enormously ignorant the greater part of mankind are, if you come to examine the measure of their knowledge. The education of the vast majority of people is wretchedly meager and superficial. Most of us cease learning at twenty-one, and then plunge into some profession in which we have little time for thought and reading, and are annually more absorbed in family cares and troubles, and add little to our stock of knowledge. Fifty or sixty years after this, our part is played out, and we retire from the stage, rarely leaving the world a wiser world than it was when we were born!

And does unbelief befit a creature like this? Is it seemly for him to talk in a skeptical and sneering tone about the revelation which the Eternal God has been pleased to make of Himself, and the unseen future, in that marvelous Book the Bible? I appeal to common sense for a reply. "Honest doubt" is a fine thing to talk about, and men are fond of saying it is "better than half the creeds." But when a man tells you he is troubled with skeptical and unbelieving feeling about Christianity, while he has probably never thought deeply about religion at all, it is impossible to avoid the conclusion that one of the most foolish things in much unbelief, is its astonishing self-conceit.

(3) For another thing, unbelief is astonishing, when you consider its unfairness and one-sidedness. Who has not known that some of the minor facts and miracles of the Bible are the ostensible reasons which many assign why they cannot receive the Book as true, and make it their rule of faith and practice. They point to the ark, and the passage of the Red Sea, and Balaam's donkey, and Jonah in the whale's belly—and ask you sarcastically if you really believe such things to be credible and historically true. And all this time they refuse to look at three great facts which never can be denied, and which no higher criticism can possibly explain away.

(a) One of those facts is the historical Person Jesus Christ Himself. How He can have been what He was on earth, lived as He lived, taught as He taught, and made the mark He has certainly made on the world—if He was not truly God, and One miraculously sent down from heaven—is a question which those who sneer at Balaam's donkey find it convenient to evade.

(b) Another fact is the Bible itself. How this Book, with all its alleged difficulties, written by a few Jews in a corner of the earth, who wrote nothing else worth reading, can be the Book that it is, so immeasurably and incomparably superior to anything else penned by man, and hold the position it holds after 1900 years' use—how all this can be, if the Book was not miraculously given by inspiration of God, is a knot which cannot be untied.

(c) The third and last fact is the effect which Christianity has had on mankind—the amazing change which has taken place in the state of the world since Christianity—and the difference at this day between those parts of the globe where the Bible is read, and those where it is not known. Nothing can account for this, but the Divine origin of Scriptural religion. No other explanation will stand.

Now these three great facts are coolly ignored by many unbelievers! They will talk by the hour about minor difficulties in the way of faith, while they refuse to touch the weighty, patent facts which I have just been naming. The difficulties of infidelity are a wide and interesting subject, which deserves more attention from the defenders of Revelation than it receives. But the unfair and unreasonable extent to which many nowadays concentrate their minds on small disputable points of revealed religion, while they refuse to look at the great standing evidences of God's truth, is to my mind one of the most astonishing features of modern unbelief!

(4) Fourthly, and lastly, unbelief is astonishing when you consider how the vast majority of those who profess it drop it, and give it up at last. Few of us perhaps have the least idea how seldom any man leaves the world an infidel. The near approach of death has a mighty effect on consciences, and brings into fearful relief the utter superficiality of much that is called scepticism. The

very people who go through life sneering and scoffing at Christianity, continually break down in their own last hours, and are glad enough to send for the ministers of religion, and seek comfort in the old doctrine of the despised creeds. Some, with a mighty swing of the pendulum, go from one extreme to another, and, after living sceptics for years, are willing to be read to, and prayed with, and receive the Lord's Supper, after neglecting every Christian ordinance and despising God's house for scores of years. Wretched indeed must systems be, which prove so useless and comfortless in the hour when comfort is most needed!

But the wonder of all wonders is, that these failures of unbelief are so notoriously and constantly occurring, and yet men will not see them, and the ranks of scepticism are perpetually filled by fresh recruits. If those who profess to deny Revelation generally died happy deaths, and left the world in great peace and joy, holding their opinions to the last, we might well expect them to have followers. But when, on the contrary, it is the rarest thing to see an unbeliever dying calmly in unbelief and giving no sign of discomfort, while the vast majority of unbelievers throw down their arms at last, and seek for the very religious consolation which they once affected to despise—it is impossible to avoid one broad conclusion. That conclusion is—that of all spiritual diseases by which fallen man is afflicted, there is none so truly astonishing and unreasonable as unbelief.

And now let me wind up this subject, with a few words of kindly advice to all my readers, and especially to the young. I am no longer young myself. It is thirty-five years since I first began to write on pious subjects. But even now I think I know the heart of a young man. I can remember the days when I tried hard to be an unbeliever, because true religion crossed my path, and I did not like its holy requirements. I was delivered from that pit, I believe, by the grace of God leading me to a book which, of late years, has undeservedly fallen out of sight, I mean "Faber's Difficulties of Infidelity." I read that book, and felt it could not be answered. But the remembrance of the struggle I went through in those days is still fresh in my mind, and I always have a deep feeling of sympathy, when I hear of the mental conflicts of young men.

Some of my readers, I dare say, are often troubled with skeptical doubts about the truth of Christianity. You are not professed unbelievers; God forbid that I should say this. But you see many things in the Bible which you cannot quite understand. You see not a few men of powerful and commanding intellect, rejecting Christianity almost entirely. You hear many, slighting things said, and depreciatory remarks made cleverly and smartly about the facts and doctrines of the Bible, which you are unable to answer. All this puzzles you. You stand in doubt. Is it really worth while to pray in private, and read the Bible, and keep the Sunday holy, and attend the Lord's Table? Is it necessary? Questions such as these are the first steps in the downward road. Unless you take heed, they may land you in infidelity. Listen to me while I offer a few **FRIENDLY COUNSELS**.

(a) For one thing, let me entreat you to deal honestly with your soul about *secret sins*. Are you quite sure there is not some bad habit, or lust, or passion, which, almost insensibly to yourself, you would like to indulge—if it were not for some remaining religious scruples? Are you quite sure that your doubts do not arise from a desire to get rid of pious restraint? You would like, if you could, to do something the Bible forbids, and you are looking about for reasons for disregarding the Bible. Oh! if this is the case with any of you—awaken to a sense of your danger! Break the chains which are gradually closing round you. Pluck out the right eye, if need be; but never be the servant of sin. I repeat—that the secret love of some wicked indulgence, is the real beginning of a vast amount of infidelity!

(b) In the next place, let me ask you to deal honestly with your soul about the use of means for acquiring religious knowledge. Can you lay your hand on your heart and say that you really take pains to find out what is truth? Do not be ashamed to pray for light. Do not be ashamed of reading some choice Christian book; and, above all, do not be ashamed of regularly studying the text of your Bible. Thousands, I am persuaded, in this day, know nothing of the Holy Book which they affect to despise, and are utterly ignorant of the real nature of that Christianity which they pretend they cannot believe. Let not that be the case with you. That famous "honest doubt" which many say is "better than half the creeds," is a pretty thing to talk about. But I venture a strong suspicion that much of the scepticism of the present day, if sifted and analyzed, would be found to spring from utter ignorance of the primary evidences of Christianity. For my part, I take my stand on these words of Solomon, "My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, listening closely to wisdom and directing your heart to understanding; furthermore, if you call out to insight and lift your voice to understanding, if you seek it like silver and search for it like hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and discover the knowledge of God. For the Lord gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding." Proverbs 2:1-6.

(c) Last, but not least, let me entreat you to deal honestly with true religion—and those who profess it. That there is such a religion in the midst of us, and that there are thousands who profess it, are simple facts which nobody can deny. These thousands believe without doubting, certain great truths of Christianity, and live and die in their belief. Let it be admitted that, in some points, these men of faith do not agree in minor points—such as the Church, the ministry, and the sacraments. But after every deduction, there remains an immense amount of common theology, about which their faith is one.

On such points as sin, and God, and Christ, and the atonement, and the authority of the Bible, and the importance of holiness, and the necessity of prayer, and self-denial, and the value of the soul, and the reality of heaven and hell, and judgment, and eternity—on such points as these, I say, all Christians are very much of one mind. Now I ask—is it honest to turn away from these men and the Christian religion with contempt, because they have many weaknesses and infirmities? Is it fair to despise their religion, and wrap yourself up in unbelief, because of their controversies and strifes? Mark the fruits of peace, and hope, and comfort, which they enjoy. Mark the solid work which, with all their faults, they do in the world, in lessening sorrow and sin—and increasing happiness, and improving their fellow-men. What fruits and work can *unbelief* show, which will bear comparison with the fruits of faith?

Look these facts in the face and deal honestly with them. Systems ought to be judged by their fruits and results. When the so-called systems of modern unbelief, and scepticism, and free thought, can point to as much good done in the world by their adherents, as simple faith has done by the hand of its friends—we may give them some attention. But until they do that, I boldly say, that the simple, old-fashioned Christian religion, has just claim on our respect, esteem, and obedience, and ought not to be despised.

After all, I must conclude with the humbling and sorrowful remark, that we who profess faith, and are never troubled with unbelief, are not altogether free from blame. Too often our faith is little better than a mere "useless assent" to certain theological propositions, but not a living, burning, active principle—which works by love, purifies the heart, and overcomes the world. It is not the faith which made primitive Christians rejoice under Roman persecution, and made Luther stand up boldly before the Diet of Worms, and made

Ridley and Latimer "love not their lives to the death," and made Wesley give up his position at Oxford to become the Evangelist of England. We are truly guilty in this matter.

If there was more *real faith* on earth, I suspect there would be less unbelief. Scepticism, in many a case, would shrink, and dwindle, and melt away—if it saw faith more awake and alive, and active, and stirring. Let us, for Christ's sake, and the sake of souls, amend our ways in this matter. Let us pray daily, "Lord, increase our faith!" Let us live, and move, and have our being, and deal with men, as if we really believed every jot and tittle of our creeds; and as if a dying, risen, interceding, and coming Christ were continually before our eyes. This, I am firmly convinced, is the surest way to oppose and diminish unbelief. Let the time past suffice us to have lived content with a *cold tame assent* to creeds. Let the time to come find us living, active believers. It was a solemn saying, which fell from the lips of an eminent minister of Christ on his death-bed—"We are none of us more than half awake!" If believers were more thorough, and real, and whole-hearted in their belief—there would be far less unbelief in the world!

Neglect Not the Gift

by J. C. Ryle

"Neglect not the gift that is in you, which was given you by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery." 1 Timothy 4:14

Brethren, the leading topics of the subject committed to me appear to be the ministerial office, and the imperative duty of not neglecting it. Paul speaks to Timothy of his office, as "a gift." And he says of this gift, "neglect it not." In opening the subject I trust I may be allowed to remind my brethren that the orders of Timothy and Titus ought to be specially interesting to them.

I consider that, strictly speaking, no minister of the Gospel of the present day, whatever may be his church or denomination, has any right to regard himself as a "successor of the apostles." I believe that, in strict accuracy, the apostles had no successors at all. Their *office* was a peculiar office. Their *order* was a peculiar order. Both office and order ceased at their death. The apostles were specially called, and immediately set apart by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. They had the power of speaking with other languages. They were enabled to confirm the doctrines they preached by miracles and signs. They had the power of infallibly declaring God's truth, and expounding His mind to the world. They were commissioned to bind and loose sins with authority. They could confer gifts upon others. In all these respects they stood alone. We are not their *successors*. They never had *any* successors! They were an order intended to continue until the Canon of Scripture was concluded, and no longer. The ministers of the present day are the successors of Timothy and Titus; but not of Paul, Peter, James, and John. I feel that this is a digression, but the importance of the subject must be my apology.

I. With regard to the ministerial office, the first thing that I would notice—is the importance of regarding it as an office which is built on plain warrant of holy scripture. It is "a gift," solemnly and publicly conferred with "the laying on of hands." There is great danger of forgetting this in the present day. On one side the reaction and rebound from Romish error, and the natural tendency of our minds to fly from one extreme to another, are calculated to make us underrate the value of a regular ministry. On the other side the bold assertion of the Plymouth Brethren, and others, that all forms, ministry, and systems are wrong, is likely to make us undervalue the importance of having an order of men specially called and set apart to preach the word, and attend to holy things. I abhor the idea of setting up ministers as mediators between Christ and the soul. I believe it was never intended that the outward government of Christian churches should be always one and the same. But notwithstanding all this, I firmly hold the opinion that the Christian ministry is of divine appointment. I am satisfied from examination of Scripture, that in every visible church there should be an order of men called and set apart for preaching and pastoral work. And with every feeling of respect for Christians who think otherwise, I must declare my own firm conviction, that the Christian ministry is plainly set forth in the epistles to Timothy and Titus, as an institution of God.

I would remark, in the next place, that although the Christian ministry is a Scriptural institution—we must be careful not to attach a *superstitious value* to what are commonly called "ordination," and the ministerial office. There is always danger of doing this. The human mind is so weak, that it is constantly inclined to extremes. It is very common to see ministers taking an extravagant view of the benefits, powers, and privileges conferred on themselves by their ordination. Let it be a settled principle in our minds, that *ordination is no magic charm*. It does no one good automatically. It conveys no necessary accompaniments of grace or gifts. It endows a man with no infallibility. It does not invest him with any special capacity for expounding, explaining, and interpreting the Word of God without danger of mistake. It does not give him any power of conferring grace upon others. Above all, it does not make him a sacrificing priest, and a mediator between God and man.

All this should be well remembered. No doubt the man who offers himself for ordination with an honest and good heart, inwardly moved by the Holy Spirit, and sincerely desirous to preach not himself, but Christ—such an one may reasonably expect a special blessing on his ordination—a greater blessing than if he undertook to preach the Gospel of his own will, without any outward call. But the chief danger in the present day, is that of *attaching an extravagant value to ordination*. Let us be on our guard.

The next remark I will make, is one near akin to the last. We should beware of resting our claim to the people's attention on our *outward* call only. It will never do to tell our people, "We are your ordained ministers, and therefore you must believe and follow whatever we tell you." On the contrary, we must tell them to prove our teaching by Scripture, and not to receive it unless it is scriptural. That man has no right to expect the attention of his people, who does not preach the Gospel and live the Gospel. The rule of Paul is clear on this point. He told the Thessalonians to esteem their ministers very highly "for their *work's* sake." (1 Thess. 5:13.)

When there is no "work" done, it is vain to expect the people's esteem. It should never be forgotten, that men have often received the outward call, and been regularly set apart and ordained—and yet been rather a *curse* to the Church of Christ than a blessing! Hophni and Phineas were in the regular succession from Aaron, and yet they made men abhor the offering of the Lord. (1 Sam. 2:17.) Annas and Caiaphas were in the right line from Aaron, and yet delivered our Lord to Pontius Pilate. Councils of regularly ordained and

consecrated bishops have frequently sanctioned and decreed great heresies!

At the same time it is notorious that *God has frequently granted large blessings to the labors of men who were never ordained at all.* I need hardly remind you of the Quakers, of Howell Harris, of Robert Haldane, and many others. After all, I will take leave to remind my brethren, that the servant's *message* is of far more importance than his *ordination*; and the physician's skill in using medicines more valued by the patient, than his diploma. It is honorable to be sent as an ambassador from the King of kings on so important a matter as that of offering the peace of God to a sinful world. But the title of 'ambassador' is of no value at all, if we carry no message of peace, and have no tidings to tell about the King.

II. With regard to the other main part of my subject, that is, the imperative duty of "not neglecting the gift given to us," I deeply feel my own need of exhortation from others. I trust that in speaking of it, you will believe I am addressing myself as well as others. Let Paul's words ring in our ears this day: *"neglect not the gift."* All ministers of the Gospel are in danger of neglecting their duty. There is a risk of getting into a state of melancholy and depression, when the first excitement and novelty of our office are worn off. Many, perhaps, expect what they have no right to expect, and then relapse into despondency, under the idea that they can do nothing, when they see sin and unbelief abounding around them. Against this desponding frame of mind all ministers need to be on their guard.

Above all men they need patience. He who cannot "wait" for fruit, as well as "work," never ought to be ordained. But I may be allowed to say, that of all ministers, none are in such peculiar danger of "neglecting their gift," as the ministers of the Established Church of England. Their position, no doubt, has its special advantages. But it has also its special perils. About the nature of these perils I beg leave to offer a few suggestions.

I would suggest, for one thing, to my brethren, that we all need to beware of ministerial indolence. It is painful to observe how easy it is for a watchman of souls to go back from his "first love," and subside into a cold, apathetic, torpid frame of mind. No one is more liable to this, perhaps, than the rector of a parish in a rural district. I speak feelingly on this point. It is my own position. I am persuaded that we have certain peculiar temptations, from which our brethren in towns are very much exempt. The rector of a rural parish has frequently a sufficient income, a good house, and a small population. Very often he has no neighbors to hold communion with. His parishioners are probably farmers and laborers—people of little or no reading, or mental cultivation. The field for exercising his talents is naturally excessively small. It is difficult to fill up his time with ministerial work. The range of subjects he can handle in the pulpit is necessarily confined. I describe a common case, I believe. I declare my own conviction, that no state of things can be conceived more likely to bring over a man's mind, insensibly almost to himself, *stagnation and rust*. In fact, I firmly believe, that many a young minister, who at college distinguished himself, and took a good degree, has been lost, engulfed, and buried—so far as usefulness goes—by unhappily giving way to the habits of indolence, which such a position is calculated to engender. Many a clergyman who, at one time, did run well and bade fair to be an ornament to the Church of Christ, winds up with the ignominious label, of being nothing more than a *clerical* farmer, gardener, musician, or painter. I implore my rural brethren to remember this. I feel the approach of this plague often myself I am sure we have special need to beware of indolence.

I suggest, for another thing, that we ought to beware of neglecting the habit of reading. I do not wish to make an idol of learning and book knowledge; but I am satisfied that an unlearned ministry, in these days of progress and wide-spread education, will never command a people's respect. Men must read, if their ministry is not to become threadbare, thin, and a mere repetition of hackneyed commonplaces. Always taking out of their minds, and never putting in—they must naturally come to the bottom. Reading will alone make a full man. And here I will just remark, that to meet the evils of the day, ministers must read books they do not agree with. They must show that they know the false doctrines they have to combat. Just as a doctor must be familiar with morbid anatomy and poisons, so must a minister be acquainted with the false doctrines of the present day.

I would suggest, for another thing, that we must beware of neglecting the preparation of our sermons. I am sorry to say there seems to me great need for this caution. I fear that many are apt to spend their whole time in their schools, in visiting their people, in attending to the sick, or in contriving and working "church machinery", and so to leave themselves little or no time for preparation fo their sermons. I deeply regret this. It is a great mistake. No possible labor of a practical kind can ever compensate for inadequate preparation for the pulpit. A minister's sermons should be incomparably the first and chief thing in his thoughts, every week that he lives. He must ever recollect that he is not ordained to be a schoolmaster, a relieving officer, or a doctor—but to preach the Word of God. The minister who slurs over his preaching under the excuse of other work, has no right to expect God's blessing.

Men talk of "the foolishness of preaching," as if that was a reason for neglecting their sermons. It should be remembered, that the *foolishness of preaching* is one thing, and *foolish preaching* quite another. *It is impossible that a sermon which costs neither time nor thought, can, as a general rule, be good. What costs nothing—is generally worth nothing.*

As to the idea of some, that preaching is not of so much importance now as formerly, I believe it to be wholly fallacious. On the contrary, I believe there never was a time when the pulpit had such power as it has now. Education has not made sermons useless. On the contrary, education has made men better judges of what sermons ought to be, and less likely to be satisfied with a weak and ill-digested sermon, than they were fifty years ago.

I cannot help remarking before I leave this part of my subject, how much it is to be regretted that the *preparation of young men for the ministerial office*, is so thoroughly inadequate as it is at present. Is there a single theological college at this day, to which anyone could, with entire satisfaction, recommend a young man to go? I believe in my conscience, that there is none. I regard this as one of the gloomiest points in the position of the Church of England. The sources from which the ministry is supplied are not trustworthy. I consider one of the great needs of the day to be a new theological college, in some central position, for training young men for the ministry, at a moderate expense, on a thoroughly sound Protestant and evangelical basis. I earnestly hope the day may come when such a college may be called into being.

I would suggest, in the next place, that we must beware of conformity to the world. The ministers of the Church of England are in special danger of this. Their position in society lays them open to many temptations. Their families are often occasions of shortcoming. *Worldliness is destructive to usefulness.* The clergyman whose own life and family are worldly, will find exhortations against worldliness go for very little with his people.

I would suggest, in the last place, that we must beware of formality. Familiarity with sacred things is very dangerous. Unless a minister watches his own spirit, he may get into the habit of doing the most spiritual acts in a mere *perfunctory* way. It is possible to preach the truth forcibly—to read the service solemnly—and visit a parish regularly—and yet to have a heart wandering away into the ends of the earth. This is a point on which the utmost vigilance is needed.

I will conclude all I have said, by reminding you, that the secret of our strength, must be daily communion with the Lord Jesus. To be safe, we must be watchful, humble, self-denying, prayerful, and given to much private meditation.

I am satisfied that the happiest minister is the man who most diligently discharges the office committed to him. None, I am sure, is so miserable as the minister, who, from indolence, or any other motive, lives below his light, and neglects his work. After all, no work is so satisfactory, and so lasting—as the work of a faithful preacher of the Gospel. None have so good a Master. None will receive such wages. A missionary who had labored for the Wesleyan Society, and died at the age of ninety-five, heard his friends round his death-bed saying one to another, "What would our old friend do, if he had to live his life over again?" He rose on his pillow, and said, "The very best thing that a man can do, is to preach the Gospel!"

Ready to Be Offered

By J. C. Ryle

"For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all those who love his appearing." (2 Timothy 4:6-8)

In these words you see the apostle Paul looking three ways—*downwards, backwards, forward.* Downwards to the grave, backwards to his own ministry, forward to that great day, the day of judgment. Let us stand by his side a few minutes, and mark the words he uses. Happy is that soul among us who can look where Paul looked, and then speak as Paul spoke.

1. He looks downwards to the grave, and he does it *without fear*. Hear what he says. "I am ready to be offered." I am like an animal brought to the place of sacrifice, and bound with cords to the horns of the altar. The wine and oil have been poured on my head. The last ceremonies have been gone through. Every preparation has been made. It only remains to receive the death-blow, and then all is over.

"The time of my departure is at hand." I am like a ship about to unmoor and put to sea. All on board is ready. I only wait to have the moorings cast off which fasten me to the shore, and I shall begin my voyage.

Brethren, these are glorious words to come from the lips of a child of Adam like ourselves. Death is a solemn thing, and never so much so as when we draw near to it ourselves. The grave is a chilling, heart-sickening idea, and it is vain to pretend it is not; yet here is a mortal man, who can look calmly into the narrow house appointed for all living, and say, while he stands upon the brink, "I see it all, and am not afraid."

2. Let us listen to him again. **He looks backwards, to his ministerial life**, and he does it without shame. Hear what he says. "I have fought a good fight." There he speaks as a **soldier**. I have fought that good battle with the world, the flesh, and the devil, from which so many shrink and draw back.

"I have finished my course." There he speaks as one who has **run** for a prize. I have run the race marked out for me. I have gone over the ground staked out for me, however rough and steep. I have not turned aside because of difficulties, and have at length reached the goal.

"I have kept the faith." There he speaks as a **steward**. I have held fast that glorious gospel which was committed to my trust. I have not mingled it with man's traditions, nor spoiled its simplicity by adding my own notions, nor allowed others to adulterate it without withstanding them to the face. As a soldier, a runner, a steward, he seems to say, I am not ashamed.

Brethren, that Christian is happy who, as he leaves this world, can leave such testimony behind him. A good conscience will save no man, wash away no sin, lift us not one inch towards heaven. Yet a good conscience will be found a pleasant visitor at our bedsides in a dying hour. Do you remember that place in Pilgrim's Progress, which describes old Honest's passage over the river of death? "The river," says Bunyan, "at that time overflowed its banks in some places—but Mr. Honest in his lifetime had spoken to one, Good Conscience, to meet him there, the which he also did, and lent him his hand, and so helped him over." Believe me, there is a mine of truth in that passage.

3. Let us hear the apostle once more. **He looks forward to the great day of reckoning**, and he does it without doubt. Mark his words: "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only—but unto all those who love His appearing." A glorious reward, he seems to say, is ready and laid up in store for me, even that crown which is only given to the righteous. In the great day of judgment the Lord shall give this crown to me, and to all besides me who have loved Him as an unseen Savior, and longed to see Him face to face. My work is over. This one thing now remains for me to look forward to, and nothing more.

You see, brethren, he speaks without any hesitation or distrust. He regards the crown as a sure thing, as his own already. He declares his belief that the righteous Judge will give it to him, with an unfaltering confidence. Paul was no stranger to all the circumstances and accompaniments of that great day to which he referred. The great white throne, the assembled world, the opened books, the revealing of all secrets, the listening angels, the solemn sentence, the eternal separation, all these were things with which he was well

acquainted. But none of these things moved him. His faith overleaped them all, and only saw Christ, his all-prevailing Advocate, and the blood of sprinkling, and sin washed away. "A crown," says he, "is laid up for me. The Lord Himself SHALL give it to me." He speaks as if he saw it all with his own eyes.

Such are the main things which these verses contain. Of most of them I cannot pretend to speak. I shall therefore only try to set before you one point in the passage, and that is the "assured hope" with which the apostle looks forward to his own prospects in the day of judgment. I shall do this the more readily because of the great importance which, I feel, attaches to the subject, and the great neglect with which, I humbly conceive, it is often treated in this day. But I shall do it at the same time with fear and trembling. I feel that I am treading on very delicate ground, and that it is easy to speak rashly and unscripturally in this matter. The road between truth and error is here especially a narrow pass, and if I shall be enabled to do good to some, without doing harm to others, I shall be very thankful.

Now, there are just four things which I wish to bring before you, and it may perhaps clear our way if I name them to you at once:

I. First, then, I will try to show you that an assured hope, such as Paul here expresses, is a true and Scriptural thing.

II. Secondly, I will make this broad concession, that a man may never arrive at this assured hope, and yet be saved.

III. Thirdly, I will give you some reasons why an assured hope is exceedingly to be desired.

IV. Lastly, I will try to point out some causes why an assured hope is so seldom attained.

I. First, then, I said, **an assured hope is a true and Scriptural thing.**

Assurance, such as Paul here expresses, is not a mere imagine or feeling. It is not the result of high animal spirits or a lively temperament of body. It is a positive gift of the Holy Spirit, bestowed without reference to men's bodily frames or constitutions, and a gift which every believer in Christ should aim at, and seek after.

The word of God appears to me to teach, that a believer may arrive at an assured confidence with regard to his own salvation.

I lay it down deliberately that a true Christian or converted man may reach that comfortable degree of faith, that in general he shall feel confident as to the safety and forgiveness of his own soul, shall seldom be troubled with doubts, seldom be distracted with hesitations, seldom be distressed with anxious questionings, seldom be alarmed about his own state. He may have many an inward conflict with sin—but he shall look forward to death, like Paul, without trembling, and to judgment without dismay.

Such is my account of assurance. Mark it well. I say neither less nor more.

Now such a statement as this is often disputed and denied. Many cannot see it at all.

The Church of Rome denounces assurance in the most unmeasured tones. The Council of Trent declares roundly that "a believer's assurance of the pardon of his sin is a vain and ungodly confidence"; and Cardinal Bellarmine, their well-known champion, calls it a "prime error of heretics."

The great majority of the worldly among ourselves oppose the doctrine of assurance. It offends and annoys them. They do not like others to feel comfortable and sure, because they never feel so themselves. That *they* cannot receive it is certainly no marvel.

But there are also some true believers who reject assurance. They shrink from it as a notion fraught with danger. They consider it borders on presumption. They seem to think it a proper humility to live in a certain degree of doubt. This is to be regretted, and does much harm.

I frankly allow there are some presumptuous fools who profess to feel a confidence for which they have no Scripture warrant. There always are some who think well of themselves when God thinks ill, just as there are some who think ill of their own case when God thinks well. There always will be such. There never yet was a Scriptural truth without abuses, impositions and counterfeits. Weeds will grow as well as wheat in rich ground. There will be fanatics as long as the world stands. But for all this, an assured hope is a real and true thing. My answer to all who deny the existence of real well-grounded assurance is simply this, "Look at Scripture." If assurance be not there I have not another word to say.

But does not Job say, "I KNOW that my Redeemer lives, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God "(Job 19:25, 26)

Does not David say, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff they comfort me "(Psalm 23:4)

Does not Isaiah say, "You will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You" (Isaiah 26:3) and again, "The work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever "(32:17)

Does not Paul say to the Romans, "The Spirit bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Romans 8:16) and to the Corinthians, "We *know* that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved we have a building of God "(2 Cor. 5:1) and to Timothy, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him" (2 Tim. 1:12) And does He not speak to the Colossians of the "full assurance of understanding" (Col. 2:2), and to the Hebrews of the "full assurance of faith and of hope" (Heb. 6:11, 10:22)

Does not Peter expressly say, "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure" (2 Peter 1:10)

Does not John say, "We know that we have passed from death unto life" (1 John 3:14) and "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God: that you may know that you have eternal life" (1 John 5:13), "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in wickedness" (1 John 5:19)

Brethren, I desire to speak with all humility on every controverted point. I feel that I am only a poor fallible child of Adam myself. But I must say that in the passages I have quoted I see something far higher than the mere "hopes," and "wishes," where so many appear content to stop. I see the language of persuasion, confidence, knowledge, nay, I might almost say of certainty—and I feel for my own part, if I may take the Scriptures in their plain obvious meaning, assurance is true.

But my answer furthermore to all who dislike the doctrine of assurance, as bordering on presumption, is this. It cannot be presumption to tread in the steps of Peter and Paul, of John and of Job. They were all eminently humble and lowly-minded men, if ever any were, and yet they all speak of their own state with an assured hope. Surely this should teach us that deep humility and strong assurance are by no means incompatible, and for this simple reason, if for no other, the charge of presumption falls to the ground.

My answer furthermore is, that many have attained to such an assured hope as our text expresses, even in modern days. Many have appeared to walk in almost uninterrupted fellowship with the Father and the Son, have seemed to enjoy an almost unceasing sense of the light of God's reconciled countenance shining down upon them, and have left on record their experience. I could mention well-known names in proof of this, if time permitted. The thing has been, and is, and that is enough.

My answer lastly is, it cannot be wrong to *feel* confident in a matter where God speaks unconditionally, to believe decidedly when God speaks decidedly, to have a sure persuasion of pardon and peace when one rests on the word and oath of Him that never changes. It is an utter mistake to suppose that the believer who feels assurance is resting on anything he sees in himself. He simply leans on the Scriptures of truth, and on the Mediator of the new covenant. He believes the Lord Jesus means what He says, and takes Him at His word. Assurance is, after all, no more than a full-grown faith; a masculine faith that grasps Christ's promise with both hands; a faith that argues like the good centurion—'If you only speak the word Lord, I shall be healed.'

Depend on it, Paul was the last man in the world to build his assured hope on anything of his own. He, who wrote himself down chief of sinners, had a deep sense of his own guilt and corruption—but then he had a still deeper sense of the length and breadth of Christ's righteousness. He had a clear view of the fountain of evil within him—but then he had a still clearer view of that other fountain which removes all uncleanness. He had a lively feeling of his own weakness—but he had a still livelier feeling that Christ's promise, "They shall never perish," would never be broken. He knew, if ever man did, that he was a poor frail bark traversing a stormy ocean. He saw, if any did, the rolling waves and roaring tempest by which he was surrounded—but then he looked away from self to Jesus, and so had hope. He remembered that anchor within the veil, sure and steadfast. He remembered the word and work and intercession of Him who loved him and gave Himself for him. And this it was that enabled him to say so boldly, "A crown is laid up for me; the Lord shall give it to me; the Lord will preserve me; I shall never be confounded."

II. I pass on to the second thing I spoke of. I said **a believer may never arrive at this assured hope, which Paul expresses, and yet be saved.**

I grant this most fully. I do not dispute it for a moment. I would not desire to make one contrite heart sad that God has not made sad—or to discourage one fainting child of God—or to leave the impression that you have no part or lot in Christ except you feel assurance. To have saving faith is one thing: to have an assured hope like the apostle Paul's is quite another. I think this ought never to be forgotten.

I know some great and good men have held a different view. But I desire to call no man master. For my own part, I should think any other view than that I have given, a most uncomfortable gospel to preach, and one very likely to keep men back a long time from the gate of life.

I shrink not from saying, that by grace a man may have sufficient faith to flee to Christ, really to lay hold on Him, really to trust in Him, really to be a child of God, really to be saved; and yet never, to his last day, be free from much anxiety, doubt, and fear.

"A letter," says old Watson, "may be written, which is not sealed; so grace may be written in the heart, yet the Spirit may not set the seal of assurance to it."

A child may be born heir to a great fortune, and yet never be aware of his riches—live childish, die childish, and never know the fullness of his possession. And so also a man may be a babe in Christ's family, think as a babe, speak as a babe, and though saved never enjoy a lively hope, never know the real privilege of his inheritance.

Do not therefore, my brethren, mistake my meaning. Do not do me the injustice to say I told you none were saved except such as could say, like Paul, "I know and I am persuaded, there is a crown laid up for me."

I do not say so. I tell you nothing of the kind. Faith in Christ a man must have. This is the one door. Without faith no man can be saved—that is certain. A man *must* feel his sins and lost estate, *must* come to Christ for salvation, *must* rest his hope on this alone. But if he has only faith to do this, however weak that faith may be, I will engage he will not miss heaven. Yes! though his faith be no bigger than a grain of mustard-seed, if it only brings him to Christ and enables him to touch the hem of His garment, he shall be saved, saved as surely as the oldest saint in Paradise, saved as completely and eternally as Peter or John or Paul. There are degrees in our sanctification. In justification there are none.

But all this time, I would have you take notice, the poor soul may have no assurance of his acceptance with God. He may have fear upon fear, and doubt upon doubt, many a question and many an anxiety, many a struggle and many a misgiving, clouds and darkness, storm and tempest to the very end.

I will engage, I repeat, that bare, simple faith in Christ shall save a man, though he never attain to assurance—but I will not engage it shall bring him to heaven with strong and abounding consolations. I will engage it shall land him safe in harbor—but I will not engage he does not reach the shore weather-beaten and tempest-tossed, scarcely knowing himself that he is safe.

Brethren, I believe it is of great importance to keep in view this distinction between faith and assurance. It explains things which an inquirer in religion sometimes finds it hard to understand. Faith, let us remember, is the root, and assurance is the flower. Doubtless

you can never have the flower without the root—but it is no less certain you may have the root and never have the flower. Faith is that poor trembling woman, who came behind Jesus in the press, and touched the hem of His garment; assurance is Stephen standing calmly in the midst of his murderers, and saying, "I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God." Faith is the penitent thief crying, "Lord, remember me"; assurance is Job, sitting in the dust, covered with sores, and saying, "I know that my Redeemer lives." Faith is Peter's drowning cry, as he began to sink, "Lord, save me"; assurance is that same Peter declaring before the council, "There is no other name given under heaven whereby we can be saved; we cannot but speak the things we have seen and heard." Faith is the still small voice, "Lord, I believe, help my unbelief"; assurance is the confident challenge, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? who is he who condemns?" Faith is Saul praying in the house of Judas at Damascus, sorrowful, blind, and alone; assurance is Paul the aged prisoner looking calmly into the grave, and saying, "I know whom I have believed; there is a crown laid up for me."

Faith is life. How great the blessing! Who can tell the gulf between life and death? Yet life may be weak, sickly, unhealthy, painful, trying, anxious, worn, burdensome, joyless, smileless, to the last. Assurance is more than life. It is health, strength, power, vigor, activity, energy, manliness, beauty.

Brethren, it is not a question of saved or not saved—but of privilege or no privilege; it is not a question of peace or no peace—but of great peace or little peace; it is not a question between the wanderers of this world and the school of Christ, it is one that belongs only to the school, it is between the first class and the highest class. He who has faith does well. Happy would I feel, if I thought you all had it. Blessed, thrice blessed, are those who believe: they are safe; they are washed; they are justified; they are beyond the power of hell. But he who has assurance does far better, sees more, feels more, knows more, enjoys more, has more days like those spoken of in Deuteronomy, the *days of heaven upon earth*.

III. I pass on to the third thing of which I spoke. I will give you **some reasons why an assured hope is exceedingly to be desired.**

I ask your attention to this point especially. I heartily wish that assurance was more sought after than it is. Too many among us begin doubting and go on doubting, live doubting, die doubting, and go to heaven in a kind of mist. It would ill become me to speak slightingly of "hopes "and "wishes," but I fear many of us sit down content with them and go no further. I would like to see fewer "doubting babes" in the Lord's family, and more who could say "I know, and am persuaded." Oh! that you would all covet the best gifts, and not be content with less. You miss the full tide of blessedness the gospel was meant to convey. You keep yourselves in a low and starved condition of soul, while your Lord is saying, "Eat and drink, O beloved, that your joy may be full."

1. Know then, for one thing, that assurance is a thing to be desired, because of **the present joy and peace it affords**. Doubts and fears have great power to mar the comfort of a true believer. Uncertainty and suspense are bad enough in any condition—in the matter of our health, our property, our families, our affections, our earthly callings—but never so bad as in the affairs of our souls. Now so long as a believer cannot get beyond "I hope and I wish," he manifestly feels a certain degree of uncertainty about his spiritual state. The very words imply as much: he says "I hope" because he dare not say "I know."

Assurance, my brethren, goes far to set a child of God free from this painful kind of bondage, and mightily ministers to comfort. It gives him joy and peace in believing. It makes him patient in tribulation, contented in trial, calm in affliction, unmoved in sorrow, not afraid of evil tidings. It sweetens his bitter cups, it lessens the burden of his crosses, it smooths the rough places on which he travels, it lightens the valley of the shadow of death. It makes him feel as if he had something solid beneath his feet and something firm under his hand, a sure Friend by the way and a sure home in the end. He feels that the great business of life is a settled business—debt, disaster, work, and all other business is by comparison small. Assurance will help a man to bear poverty and loss, it will teach him to say, "I know that I have in heaven a better and more enduring substance. Silver and gold have I none—but grace and glory are mine and can never be taken away." Assurance will support a man in sickness, make all his bed, smooth his pillow. It will enable him to say, "If my earthly house of this tabernacle fail, I have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. . . . I desire to depart and be with Christ. My flesh and my heart may fail—but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever."

He who has assured hope can sing in prison, like Paul and Silas at Philippi. Assurance can give songs in the night. He can sleep with the full prospect of execution on the next day, like Peter in Herod's dungeon. Assurance says, "I will lay me down and take my rest, for you, Lord, make me dwell in safety." He can rejoice to suffer shame for Christ's sake, as the apostles did. Assurance says, "Rejoice and be exceeding glad—there is a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." He can meet a violent and painful death without fear, as Stephen did in olden time, and Cranmer, Ridley, Latimer and Taylor in our own land. Assurance says, "Fear not those who kill the body, and after that have no more they can do. Lord Jesus, into Your hand I commend my spirit."

Ah, brethren, the comfort assurance can give in the hour of death is a great point, depend upon it, and never will you think it so great as when your turn comes to die. In that solemn hour there are few believers who do not find out the value and privilege of assurance, whatever they may have thought about it in their lives; general hopes and trusts are all very well to live upon—but when you come to die you will want to be able to say, "I *know* and I *feel*." Believe me, Jordan is a cold stream to cross alone. The last enemy, even death, is a strong foe. When our souls are in departing, there is no cordial like the strong wine of assurance.

There is a beautiful expression in the Prayer-book's Visitation of the Sick. "The Almighty Lord, who is a most strong tower to all those who put their trust in Him, be now and evermore your defense, and make you *know* and *feel* that there is no other name under heaven through whom you may receive health and salvation—but only the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." The compilers showed great wisdom there: they saw that when the eyes grow dim and the heart grows faint, there must be *knowing* and *feeling* what Christ has done for us if there is to be perfect peace.

2. Let me name another thing. Assurance is to be desired, because **it tends to make a Christian an active, useful Christian**. None, generally speaking, do so much for Christ on earth as those who enjoy the fullest confidence of a free entrance into heaven. That sounds wonderful, I daresay—but it is true.

A believer who lacks an assured hope will spend much of his time in inward searchings of heart about his own state. He will be full of his own doubtings and questionings, his own conflicts and corruptions. In short, you will often find that he is so taken up with this

internal warfare that he has little leisure for other things, little time to work for God.

Now a believer who has, like Paul, an assured hope is free from these harassing distractions. He does not vex his soul with doubts about his own pardon and acceptance. He looks at the covenant sealed with blood, at the finished work and never-broken word of his Lord and Savior, and therefore counts his salvation a *settled thing*. And thus he is able to give an undivided attention to the Lord's work, and so in the long run to do more.

Take, for an illustration of this, two English emigrants, and suppose them set down side by side in Australia or New Zealand. Give each of them a piece of land to clear and cultivate. Secure that land to them by every needful legal instrument, let it be conveyed as freehold to them and theirs forever, let the conveyance be publicly registered, and the property made sure to them by every deed and security that man's ingenuity can devise. Suppose, then, that one of them shall set to work to bring his land into cultivation, and labor at it day after day without intermission or cessation. Suppose, in the meanwhile, that the other shall be continually leaving his work, and repeatedly going to the public registry to ask whether the land really is his own—whether there is not some mistake—whether after all there is not some flaw in the legal instruments which conveyed it to him. The one shall never doubt his title—but just diligently work on; the other shall never feel sure of his title, and spend half his time in going to Sydney or Auckland with needless inquiries about it. Which, now, of these two men will have made most progress in a year's time? Who will have done the most for his land, got the greatest breadth under tillage, have the best crops to show? You all know as well as I do—I need not supply an answer. There can only be one reply.

Brethren, so will it be in the matter of our title to "mansions in the skies." None will do so much for the Lord who bought them as the believer who sees that title clear. The joy of the Lord will be that man's strength. "Restore unto me," says David, "the joy of Your salvation . . . then will I teach transgressors Your ways." Never were there such working Christians as the apostles. They seemed to live to labor: Christ's work was their food and drink. They counted not their lives dear; they spent and were spent; they laid down health, ease, worldly comfort at the foot of the cross. And one cause of this, I believe, was their assured hope. They were men who said, "We know that we are of God."

3. Let me name another thing. Assurance is to be desired, because **it tends to make a Christian a decided Christian**. Indecision and doubt about our own state in God's sight is a grievous disease, and the mother of many evils. It often produces a wavering and an unstable walk in following the Lord. Assurance helps to cut many a knot, and to make the path of Christian duty clear and plain. Many, of whom we feel a hope that they are God's children, and have grace, however weak, are continually perplexed with doubts on points of practice. "Should we do such and such a thing? Shall we give up this family custom? Ought we to go to that place? How shall we draw the line about visiting? What is to be the measure of our dressing and entertainments? Are we never to dance, never to play at cards, never to attend pleasure parties?" These are questions which seem to give them constant trouble. And often, very often, the simple root of this perplexity is that they do not feel assured that they themselves are children of God. They have not yet settled the point which side of the gate they are on. They do not know whether they are inside the ark or not.

That a child of God ought to act in a certain decided way they quite feel—but the grand question is, "Are they children of God themselves?" If they only felt they were so, they would go straightforward and take a decided line—but not feeling sure about it, their conscience is forever coming to a dead-lock. The devil whispers, "Perhaps, after all, you are only a hypocrite; what right have you to take a decided course? wait until you are really a Christian." And this whisper too often just turns the scale, and leads on to some wretched conformity to the world.

Brethren, I verily believe you have here one reason why so many are inconsistent, unsatisfactory, and half-hearted in their conduct about the world. They feel no assurance that they are Christ's, and so they feel a hesitancy about breaking with the world. They shrink from laying aside all the ways of the old man, because they are not confident they have put on the new. Depend upon it, one secret of halting between two opinions is want of assurance.

4. Let me name one thing more. Assurance is to be desired because **it tends to make the holiest Christians.**

This, too, sounds wonderful and amazing—and yet it is true. It is one of the paradoxes of the Gospel, contrary, at first sight, to reason and common-sense, and yet it is a fact. Bellarmine was seldom more wide of the truth than when he said, "Assurance tends to carelessness and sloth." He who is freely forgiven by Christ will always do much for Christ's glory, and he who has the fullest assurance of this forgiveness will ordinarily keep up the closest walk with God. It is a faithful saying in the first Epistle of John, "Every man who has this hope in him purifies himself, even as He is pure."

None are so likely to maintain a watchful guard over their heart and life, as those who know the comfort of living in near communion with God. They feel their privilege, and will fear losing it. They will dread falling from their high estate and marring their own comforts by inconsistencies. He who goes a journey and has little money to lose, takes little thought of danger, and cares not how late he travels in a dangerous country. He who carries gold and jewels, on the contrary, will be a cautious traveler: he will look well to his road, his house, and his company, and run no risks. The man that most fully enjoys the light of God's reconciled countenance will be a man tremblingly afraid of losing its blessed comfort, and jealously fearful of doing anything to grieve the Holy Spirit.

Beloved brethren, would you have great peace? Would you like to feel the everlasting arms around you, and to hear the voice of Jesus drawing near to your soul, and saying, "I am your salvation"? Would you be useful in your day and generation? Would you be known of all as bold, firm, decided, single-eyed followers of Christ? Would you be eminently spiritually-minded and holy? "Ah!" you will some of you say, "these are the very things we desire: we long for them, we pant after them—but they seem far from us."

Then take my advice this day. Seek an assured hope, like Paul's. Seek to obtain a simple, childlike confidence in God's promises. Seek to be able to say with the apostle, "I know whom I have believed; I am persuaded that He is mine and I am His."

You have many of you tried the ways and methods, and completely failed. Change your plan. Go upon another tack. Begin with assurance. Lay aside your doubts. Cast aside your faithless backwardness to take the Lord at His word. Come and roll yourself, your soul and your sins upon your gracious Savior. Begin with simple believing, and all other things shall soon be added to you.

IV. I come to the last thing of which I spoke. I promised to point out **some probable causes why an assured hope is so seldom**

attained.

This, brethren, is a very serious question, and ought to raise in us all great searchings of heart. Few certainly of all the sheep of Christ ever seem to reach this blessed spirit of assurance. Many, comparatively, believe—but few are persuaded. Many, comparatively, have saving faith—but few that glorious confidence which shines forth in our text.

Now, why is this so? Why is a thing which Peter enjoins as a positive duty a thing of which few believers have an experimental knowledge? Why is an assured hope so rare?

I desire to offer a few suggestions on this point with all humility. I know that many have never attained assurance, at whose feet I would gladly sit both in earth and heaven. *Perhaps* the Lord sees something in some men's natural temperament which makes assurance not good for them. Perhaps to be kept in spiritual health they need to be kept very low. God only knows. Still, after every allowance, I fear there are many believers without an assured hope, whose case may too often be explained by causes such as these.

1. One common cause, I suspect, is **a defective view of the doctrine of justification**. I am inclined to think that justification and sanctification are in many minds insensibly confused together. They receive the gospel truth that there must be something done *in us*, as well as something done *for us*, if we are true believers; and so far they are right. But then, without being aware of it perhaps, they seem to imbibe the erroneous idea, that this justification is in some degree affected by something within themselves. They do not clearly see that Christ's work and not their own work, either in whole or in part, either directly or indirectly, alone is the ground of our acceptance with God; that justification is a thing entirely outside of us, and nothing is needful on our part but simple faith, and that the weakest believer is as fully justified as the strongest. They appear to forget sometimes that we are saved and justified as sinners, and only as sinners, and that we never can attain to anything higher, if we live to the age of Methuselah. Redeemed sinners, justified sinners, and renewed sinners doubtless we must be—but sinners, sinners always to the very last. They seem, too, to expect that a believer may some time in his life be in a measure free from corruption, and attain to a kind of inward perfection. And not finding this angelical state of things in their own hearts, they at once conclude there must be something wrong, go mourning all their days, and are oppressed with fears that they have no part or lot in Christ.

My dear brethren, if you or any believing soul here desires assurance and has not got it, go and ask yourself first of all if you are sound in the faith, if you are thoroughly girt about with truth, and your eyes thoroughly clear in the matter of justification.

2. Another common cause, I am afraid, is **slothfulness about growth in grace**. I suspect many believers hold dangerous and unscriptural views on this point. Many appear to me to think that, once converted, they have little more to attend to—that a state of salvation is a kind of easy-chair, in which they may just sit still, lie back, and be happy. They seem to imagine that grace is given to them, that they may enjoy it, and they forget that it is given to be used and employed, like a talent. Such people lose sight of the many direct injunctions to increase, to grow, to abound more and more, to add to our faith and the like; and in this do-little condition of mind, I never marvel that they miss assurance.

Brethren, you must always remember **there is an inseparable connection between assurance and diligence**. "Give diligence," says Peter, "to make your calling and election sure." "I desire," says Paul, "that everyone of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end." "It is the diligent soul," says the Proverb, "that shall be made fat." There is much truth in the maxim of the Puritans, "Saving faith comes by hearing—but faith of assurance comes not without doing."

3. Another common cause is **an inconsistent walk in life**. With grief and sorrow I feel constrained to say, I fear nothing in this day more frequently prevents men attaining an assured hope than this. Inconsistency of life is utterly destructive of great peace of heart. The two things are incompatible. They cannot go together. If you must keep your besetting sins, and cannot make up your minds to give them up, if you shrink from cutting off the right hand and plucking out the right eye when required, I will engage you shall have no assurance. A vacillating walk, a backwardness to take a bold and decided line, a readiness to conform to the world, a hesitating witness for Christ, a lingering tone of profession—all these make up a sure recipe for bringing a blight upon the garden of your soul. It is vain to suppose you will feel assured and persuaded of your pardon and peace, unless you count all God's commandments concerning all things to be right, and hate every sin whether great or small. One Achan allowed in the camp of your heart, will poison all your springs of comfort.

I bless God our salvation in no sense depends on our own works. "By grace are we saved;" not by works of righteousness that we have done, through faith, without the deed of the law. But I never would have any believer for a moment forget that our sense of salvation depends much on the manner of our living. Inconsistency will dim your eyes and bring clouds between you and the sun. The sun is the same—but you will not be able to see its brightness and enjoy its warmth. It is in the path of well-doing that assurance will come down and meet you. "The secret of the Lord," says David, "is with those who fear Him." "Great peace have those who love your law: and nothing shall cause them to stumble." "To him that orders his conversation aright will I show the salvation of God." Paul was a man who exercised himself to have a conscience void of offence toward God and toward man; he could say boldly, "I have fought a good fight, ... I have kept the faith." I do not wonder that the Lord enabled him to add confidently, "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day."

Brethren, I commend the three points I have just named to your own private consideration. I am sure they are worth thinking over, and I advise every believer present who lacks assurance to do it. And may the Lord give him understanding in this and all things.

And now, brethren, in closing this sermon, let me speak first to those among you who have not yet believed, have not yet come out from the world, chosen the good part and followed Christ. See, then, my dear friends, from this subject the real privilege of a true Christian. Do not judge the Lord Jesus Christ by His people. Do not judge the comforts of His kingdom by the measure to which many of His subjects attain. Alas! we are many of us poor creatures. We come short, very short of the blessedness we might enjoy. But depend upon it there are glorious things in the city of our God, which they who have an assured hope taste even in their lifetime. There is bread enough and to spare in our Father's house, though many of us, alas! eat but little of it, and continue weak.

And why should not you enter in and share our privileges? Why should not you come with us and sit down by our side? What can the world give you, after all, which will bear comparison with the hope of the least member of the family of Christ? Truly the weakest child of God has got more durable riches in his hand, than the wealthiest man of the world that ever breathed. Oh! but I feel deeply

for you in these days, if ever I did. I feel deeply for those whose treasure is all on earth and whose hopes are this side the grave. Yes! when I see old kingdoms and dynasties shaking to the very foundations; when I see property dependent on public confidence melting like snow in spring, when I see stocks and shares and funds losing their value, I do feel deeply for those who have no better portion, no place in a kingdom that cannot be removed.

Take the advice of a minister of Christ. Seek a treasure that cannot be taken from you; seek a city which has lasting foundations. Do as the apostle Paul did. Give yourself to Christ, and seek an incorruptible crown that fades not away. Come to the Lord Jesus Christ as lowly sinners, and He will receive you, pardon you, give you His renewing Spirit, fill you with peace. This shall give you more real comfort than this world has ever done. There is a gulf in your heart which nothing but Christ can fill.

Lastly, let me turn to all believers here present and speak to them a few words of brotherly counsel. For one thing, resolve this day to seek after an assured hope, if you do not feel you have got it. Believe, me, believe me, it is worth the seeking. If it is good to be sure in earthly things, how much better is it to be sure in heavenly things! Seek to know that you have a title, good and solid and not to be overthrown. Your salvation is a fixed and certain thing. God knows it. Why should not you seek to know it too? Paul never saw the book of life; and yet Paul says "I know and am persuaded." Go home and pray for an increase of faith. Cultivate that blessed root more, and then by God's blessing you shall have the flower.

For another thing, be not surprised if you do not attain assurance all at once. It is good sometimes to be kept waiting. We do not value things which we get without trouble. Joseph waited long for deliverance from prison—but it came at length. For another thing, be not surprised at occasional doubts after you have got assurance. No morning sun lasts all the day. There is a devil, and a strong devil too, and he will take care you know it. You must not forget you are on earth and not in heaven. Some doubt there always will be. He who never doubts has nothing to lose. He who never fears possesses nothing truly valuable. He who is never jealous knows little of deep love.

And finally do not forget that assurance is a thing that may be lost. Oh! it is a most delicate plant. It needs daily, hourly watching, watering, tending, cherishing. So take care. David lost it. Peter lost it. Each found it again—but not until after bitter tears. Quench not the Spirit; grieve Him not; vex Him not. Drive Him not to a distance by tampering with small bad habits and little sins. Little jarrings make unhappy homes, and petty inconsistencies will bring in a distance between you and the Spirit.

Hear the conclusion of the whole matter. The nearest walker with God will generally be kept in the greatest peace. The believer who follows the Lord most fully will ordinarily enjoy the most assured hope.

The True Church

by J. C. Ryle, 1858

"On this rock I will build *My church*, and the gates of hell will not overcome it." Matthew 16:18

We live in a world in which all things are passing away. Kingdoms, empires, cities, institutions, families—all are liable to change and corruption. One universal law seems to prevail everywhere—in all created things there is a tendency to decay. There is something sad and depressing in this. What profit has a man, in the labor of his hands? Is there nothing that shall stand? Is there nothing that shall last? Is there nothing that shall endure? Is there nothing of which we can say—This shall continue forever?

You have the answer to these questions in the words of our text. Our Lord Jesus Christ speaks of something which shall continue, and not pass away. There is one created thing which is an exception to the universal rule to which I have referred. There is one thing which shall never perish and pass away. That thing is the building founded upon the rock—the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ. He declares, in the words you have heard tonight: "On this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not overcome it." There are five things in these words which demand your attention:

1. A Building: "My Church"

2. A Builder: Christ says, "I will build My Church"

3. A Foundation: "On this rock I will build My Church"

4. Perils Implied: "The gates of hell"

5. Security Asserted: "The gates of hell will not overcome it"

May God bless the words that shall be spoken. May we all search our own hearts tonight, and know whether or not we belong to this one Church. May we all go home to reflect and to pray!

1. First, you have a "Building" mentioned in the text. The Lord Jesus Christ speaks of "My Church." Now what is this Church? Few inquiries can be made of more importance than this. For lack of due attention to this subject, the errors that have crept into the Church, and into the world, are neither few nor small. The Church of our text is no material building. It is no temple made with hands, of wood, or brick, or stone, or marble. It is a company of men and women. It is no particular visible Church on earth. It is not the Eastern Church or the Western Church. It is not the Church of England, or the Church of Scotland—much less is it the Church of Rome. The Church of our text is one that makes far less show in the eyes of man, but is of far more importance in the eyes of God.

The Church of our text is made up of all true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. It comprehends all who have repented of sin, and fled

to Christ by faith, and been made new creatures in Him. It comprises all God's elect, all who have received God's grace, all who have been washed in Christ's blood, all who have been clothed in Christ's righteousness, all who have been born again and sanctified by Christ's Spirit. All such, of every nation, and people, and tongue, compose the Church of our text. This is the body of Christ. This is the flock of Christ. This is the bride. This is the Lamb's wife. This is the Church on the rock.

The members of this Church do not all worship God in the same way, or use the same form of government. Our own 34th Article declares, "It is not necessary that ceremonies should be in all places one and alike." But they all worship with one heart. They are all led by one Spirit. They are all really and truly holy. They can all say "Alleluia," and they can all reply "Amen." This is that Church, to which all visible Churches on earth are servants. Whether they are Episcopalian, Independent, or Presbyterian, they all serve the interests of the one true Church. They are the scaffolding, behind which the great building is carried on. They are the husk, under which the living kernel grows.

They have their various degrees of usefulness. The best and worthiest of them, is that which trains up most members for Christ's true Church. But no visible Church has any right to say, *"We are the only true Church. We are the men, and truth shall die with us."* No visible Church should ever dare to say, *"We shall stand forever. The gates of hell will not overcome us."* This is that Church to which belong the Lord's precious promises of preservation, continuance, protection, and final glory. "Whatever," says Hooker, "we read in Scripture, concerning the endless love and saving mercy which God shows towards His Churches, the only proper subject is this Church, which we properly term the mystical body of Christ." *Small* and *despised* as the true Church may be in this world, it is *precious* and *honorable* in the sight of God. The temple of Solomon in all its glory was nothing, in comparison with that Church which is built upon a rock.

Men and brethren, see that you hold sound doctrine on the subject of "the Church." A mistake here may lead to dangerous and soul-ruining errors. The Church which is made up of true believers, is the Church for which we, who are ministers, are specially ordained to preach. The Church which comprises all who repent and believe the Gospel, is the Church to which we desire you to belong. Our work is not done, and our hearts are not satisfied, until you are made new creatures, and are members of the one true Church. Outside of this Church, there can be no salvation. I pass on to the second point, to which I proposed to call your attention.

2. Our text contains not merely a building, but a "Builder". The Lord Jesus Christ declares, "**I** will build My Church." The true Church of Christ is tenderly cared for by all the three persons of the blessed Trinity. In the economy of redemption, beyond all doubt, God the *Father* chooses, and God the *Holy Spirit* sanctifies, every member of Christ's mystical body. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, three Persons in one God, cooperate for the salvation of every saved soul. This is truth, which ought never to be forgotten. Nevertheless, there is a peculiar sense in which the help of the Church is laid on the Lord Jesus Christ. He is peculiarly and preeminently the Redeemer and the Savior. Therefore it is, that we find Him saying in our text, "*I* will build—the work of building is *my* special work." It is Christ who calls the members of the Church in due time. They are "the called of Jesus Christ" (Romans 1:6). It is Christ who gives them life. "The Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it" (John 5:21). It is Christ who washes away their sins. He "who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood" (Revelation 1:5). It is Christ who gives them peace. "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you" (John 14:27). It is Christ who gives them eternal life. "I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish" (John 10:28). It is Christ who grants them repentance. "God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior, that he might give repentance" (Acts 5:31). It is Christ who enables them to become God's children. "To all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12). It is Christ who carries on the work within them, when it is begun. "Because I live, you also will live" (John 14:19).

In short, "God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him [Christ]" (Colossians 1:19). He is the author and finisher of faith. From Him every joint and member of the mystical body of Christians is supplied. Through Him they are strengthened for duty. By Him they are kept from falling. He shall preserve them to the end, and present them faultless before the Father's throne with exceeding great joy. He is all things, and all in all to believers.

The mighty *agent* by whom the Lord Jesus Christ carries out this work in the number of His Churches, is, without doubt, the *Holy Spirit*. He it is who applies Christ and His benefits to the soul. He it is who is ever renewing, awakening, convincing, leading to the cross, transforming, taking out of the world, stone after stone, and adding it to the mystical building. But the great Chief Builder, who has undertaken to execute the work of redemption and bring it to completion, is the Son of God—the Word who was made flesh. It is Jesus Christ who "builds."

In building the true Church, the Lord Jesus condescends to use many subordinate *instruments*. The ministry of the Gospel, the circulation of the Scriptures, the friendly rebuke, the word spoken in season, the drawing influence of afflictions—all, all are means and methods by which His work is carried on. But Christ is the great superintending architect, ordering, guiding, directing all that is done. What the sun is to the whole solar system—that Christ is to all the members of the true Church. "Paul may plant, and Apollos water, but *God* gives the increase." Ministers may preach, and writers may write, but the Lord Jesus Christ alone can build. And except He builds, the work stands still.

Great is the *wisdom* with which the Lord Jesus Christ builds His Church. All is done at the right time, and in the right way. Each stone in its turn is put in the right place. Sometimes He chooses great stones, and sometimes He chooses small stones. Sometimes the work moves fast, and sometimes it moves slowly. Man is frequently impatient, and thinks that nothing is happening. But man's time is not God's time. A thousand years in His sight are but as a single day. The great Builder makes no mistakes. He knows what He is doing. He sees the end from the beginning. He works by a perfect, unalterable and certain plan. The mightiest conceptions of architects, like Michaelangelo are mere insignificant child's play, in comparison with Christ's wise counsels respecting His Church.

Great is the *condescension* and *mercy*, which Christ exhibits in building His Church. He often chooses the most unlikely and roughest stones, and fits them into a most excellent work. He despises no one, and rejects none—on account of former sins and past transgressions. He delights to show mercy. He often takes the most thoughtless and ungodly, and transforms them into polished corners of His spiritual temple.

Great is the *power* which Christ displays in building His Church. He carries on his work in spite of opposition from the world, the flesh, and the devil. In storm, in chaos, through troublesome times—silently, quietly, without noise, without stir, without excitement—

the building progresses. "I will work," He declares, "and none shall hinder it." Brethren, the children of this world take no interest in the building of this Church, they care nothing for the conversion of souls. What are broken spirits and penitent hearts to them? It is all foolishness in their eyes. But while the children of this world care nothing, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God. For the preserving of that Church, the laws of nature have oftentimes been suspended. For the good of that Church, all the providential dealings of God in this world are ordered and arranged. For the elect's sake, wars are brought to an end, and peace is given to a nation. Statesmen, rulers, emperors, kings, presidents, heads of governments, have their schemes and plans, and think them of vast importance.

But there is another work going on of infinitely greater significance, for which they are all but as the axes and saws in God's hands. That work is the gathering in of living stones into the one true Church. How little are we told in God's Word about unconverted men, compared with what we are told about believers! The history of Nimrod, the mighty hunter, is dismissed in a few words. The history of Abraham, the father of the faithful, occupies several chapters. Nothing in Scripture is so important as the concerns of the true Church. The world makes up little of God's Word. The Church and its story make up much.

Forever let us thank God, my beloved brethren, that the building of the one true Church is laid on the shoulders of One who is mighty. Let us bless God that it does not rest upon man. Let us bless God that it does not depend on missionaries, ministers, or committees. Christ is the almighty Builder. He will carry on His work, though nations and visible Churches do not know their duty. Christ will never fail. That which He has undertaken He will certainly accomplish! I pass on to the third point, which I proposed to consider—

3. The FOUNDATION upon which this Church is built. The Lord Jesus Christ tells us, "On this **rock** I will build my church." What did the Lord Jesus Christ mean, when He spoke of this foundation? Did He mean the Apostle Peter, to whom He was speaking? I think assuredly not. I can see no reason, if he meant Peter, why did He not say, "On you" will I build My church. If He had meant Peter, He would have said, I will build My Church on you, as plainly as He said, "I will give you the keys." No! it was not the person of the Apostle Peter, but the *good confession* which the Apostle had just made. It was not Peter, the erring, unstable man; but the mighty truth which the Father had revealed to Peter. It was *the truth concerning Jesus Christ himself,* which was the Rock. It was Christ's Mediatorship, and Christ's Messiahship. It was the blessed truth, that Jesus was the promised Savior, the real Intercessor between God and man. This was the rock, and this was the foundation on which the Church of Christ was to be built.

My brethren, this foundation was laid at a mighty cost. It was necessary that the Son of God should take our nature upon Him, and in that nature live, suffer, and die, not for His own sins, but for ours. It was necessary that in that nature Christ should go to the grave, and rise again. It was necessary that in that nature Christ should go up to heaven, to sit at the right hand of God, having obtained eternal redemption for all His people. No other foundation but this could have borne the weight of that Church of which our text speaks. No other foundation could have met the necessities of a world of sinners.

That foundation once obtained, is very strong. It can bear the weight of the sin of all the world. It has borne the weight of all the sins of all the believers who have built on it. Sins of thought, sins of the imagination, sins of the heart, sins of the head, sins which everyone has seen, and sins which no man knows, sins against God, and sins against man, sins of all kinds and descriptions—that mighty rock can bear the weight of all these sins, and not give way. The mediatorial office of Christ is a sufficient remedy for all the sins of all the world.

To this one foundation every member of Christ's true Church is joined. In many things believers are disunited and disagreed. In the matter of their soul's foundation they are all of one mind. They are all built on the rock. Ask where they get their peace, and hope, and joyful expectation of good things to come. You would find that it all flows from that one mighty truth—Christ the Mediator between God and man, and the office that Christ holds, as the High priest and Promise of sinners.

Here is the point which demands our personal attention. Are we on the rock? Are we really joined to the one foundation? What does that godly man, Leighton say? "God has laid this precious stone for this very purpose—that weary sinners may rest upon it. The multitude of imaginary believers lie all around it, but they are not any better for that, any more than stones that lie loose in heaps, near a foundation, but not joined to it. There is no benefit to us by Christ, without union with Him."

Look to your foundation, my beloved brethren, if you would know whether or not you are members of the one true Church. It is a point that may be known to yourselves. Your public worship we can see—but we cannot see whether you are personally built upon the rock. Your attendance at the Lord's table we can see—but we cannot see whether you are joined to Christ, and one with Christ, and Christ in you. But all shall come to light one day. The secrets of all hearts shall be exposed. Perhaps you go to church regularly and you pray faithfully. All this is right and good, so far as it goes. But see that you make no mistake about your own personal salvation. See that your own soul is on the rock. Without this, all else is nothing. Without this, you will never stand in the day of judgment. Better a thousand times in that day to be found in a poor cottage on the rock, than in a stately palace on the sand! I proceed, in the fourth place, to speak of—

4. The implied TRIALS of the Church, to which our text refers. There is mention made of "the gates of hell." By that expression we are to understand the power of the devil! The history of Christ's true Church has always been one of conflict and war. It has been constantly assailed by a deadly enemy, Satan, the prince of this world. The devil hates the true Church of Christ with an undying hatred. He is ever stirring up opposition against all its members. He is ever urging the children of this world to do his will, and injure and harass the people of God. If he cannot bruise the *head*, he will bruise the *heel*. If he cannot rob believers of heaven, he will *aggravate* them as they travel the road to heaven.

For six thousand years this hostility has gone on. Millions of the ungodly have been the devil's agents, and done the devil's work, though they did not know it. The Pharaohs, the Herods, the Neros, the Julians, the Diocletians, the bloody Marys—were Satan's tools, when they persecuted the disciples of Jesus Christ. Warfare with the powers of hell has been the experience of the whole body of Christ. It has always been a bush *burning*, though not *consumed*—a woman *fleeing* into the wilderness, but not *swallowed* up. The visible Churches have their times of prosperity and seasons of peace, but never has there been a time of peace for the true Church. Its conflict is perpetual. Its battle never ends.

Warfare with the powers of hell is the experience of every individual member of the true Church. Each has to fight. What are the lives

of all the saints, but records of battles? What were such men as Paul, and James, and Peter, and John, and Polycarp, and Ignatius, and Augustine, and Luther, and Calvin, and Latimer, and Baxter—but soldiers engaged in a constant warfare? Sometimes their persons have been assailed, and sometimes their property. Sometimes they have been harassed by slander, and sometimes by open persecution. But in one way or another the devil has been continually warring against the Church. The "gates of hell" have been continually assaulting the people of Christ.

Men and brethren, we who preach the Gospel can hold out to all who come to Christ, exceeding great and precious promises. We can offer boldly to you in our Master's name, the peace of God which passes all understanding. Mercy, free grace, and full salvation, are offered to everyone who will come to Christ, and believe on Him. But we promise you no peace with the world, or with the devil. We warn you, on the contrary, that there must be warfare, so long as you are in the body. We would not keep you back, or deter you from Christ's service. But we would have you count the cost, and fully understand what Christ's service entails. Hell is behind you. Heaven is before you. Home lies on the other side of a troubled sea.

Thousands, tens of thousands have crossed these stormy waters, and in spite of all opposition, have reached the haven where they would be. Hell has assailed them, but has not prevailed. Go forward, beloved brethren, and fear not the adversary. Only abide in Christ, and the victory is sure. Marvel not at the hatred of the gates of hell. "If you were of the world, the world would love as its own." So long as the world is the world, and the devil the devil—there must be warfare, and believers in Christ must be soldiers! The world hated Christ, and the world will hate true Christians, as long as the earth stands. As the great reformer, Luther, said, "Cain will go on murdering Abel so long as the Church is on earth."

Be prepared for the hostility of the gates of hell. Put on the whole armor of God. The tower of David contains a thousand shields, all ready for the use of God's people. The weapons of our warfare have been tried by millions of poor sinners like ourselves, and have never been found to fail. Be patient under the bitterness of the gates of hell. It is all working together for your good. It tends to sanctify. It keeps you awake. It makes you humble. It drives you nearer to the Lord Jesus Christ. It weans you from the world. It helps to make you pray more. Above all, it makes you long for heaven, and say with heart as well as lips, "Come, Lord Jesus."

Do not be cast down by the hatred of hell. The warfare of the true child of God is as much a mark of grace as the inward peace which he enjoys. No cross, no crown! No conflict, no saving Christianity! "Blessed are you," said our Lord Jesus Christ, "when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me." There remains one thing more to be considered—

5. The SECURITY of the true Church of Christ. There is a glorious promise given by the mighty Builder, "The gates of Hades will not overcome it." He who cannot lie, has pledged His royal word, that all the powers of hell shall never overthrow His Church. It shall continue, and stand, in spite of every assault. It shall never be overcome.

All other created things perish and pass away, but not the Church of Christ. The hand of outward violence, or the moth of inward decay, prevail over everything else, but not over the church that Christ builds. Empires have risen and fallen in rapid succession. Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Tyre, Carthage, Rome, Greece, Venice—where are all these now? They were all the creations of man's hand, and have passed away. But the Church of Christ lives on. The mightiest cities have become heaps of ruins.

The broad walls of Babylon are sunk to the ground. The palaces of Nineveh are mounds of dust. The hundred gates of Thebes are only matters of history. Tyre is a place where fishermen hang their nets. Carthage is a desolation. Yet all this time the true Church stands. The gates of hell do not prevail against it.

The earliest visible Churches have in many cases decayed and perished. Where is the Church of Ephesus and the Church of Antioch? Where is the Church of Alexandria and the Church of Constantinople? Where are the Corinthian, and Philippian, and Thessalonian Churches? Where, indeed, are they all? They departed from the Word of God. They were proud of their bishops, and synods, and ceremonies, and learning, and antiquity. They did not glory in the true cross of Christ. They did not hold fast the Gospel. They did not give Jesus His rightful office, or faith its rightful place. They are now among the things that have been. Their candlestick has been taken away. But all this time the true Church has lived on.

Has the true Church been oppressed in one country? It has fled to another. Has it been trampled on and oppressed in one soil? It has taken root and flourished in some other climate. Fire, sword, prisons, fines, punishments—have never been able to destroy its vitality. Its persecutors have died and gone to their own place, but the Word of God has lived, and grown and multiplied.

Weak as this true Church may appear to the eye of man, it is an anvil which has broken many a hammer in times past, and perhaps will break many more before the end. He who lays hands on it, is touching the apple of God's eye!

The promise of our text is true of the whole body of the true Church. Christ will never be without a witness in the world. He has had a people in the worst of times. He had seven thousand in Israel even in the days of Ahab. The devil may rage horribly. The Church may in some countries be brought exceedingly low. But the gates of hell shall never entirely prevail. The promise of our text is true of every individual member of the Church.

Some of God's people have been brought very low, so that they despaired of their safety. Some have fallen sadly, as David and Peter did. Some have departed from the faith for a time. Many have been tried by cruel doubts and fears. But all have gotten safely home at last, the youngest as well as the oldest, the weakest as well as the strongest. And so it will be to the end. Can you prevent tomorrow's sun from rising? Can you prevent the tide in the channel from ebbing and flowing? Can you prevent the planets moving in their respective orbits? Then, and then alone, can you prevent the salvation of any believer, however feeble—of any living stone in that Church which is built on the rock, however small or insignificant that stone may appear.

The true Church is Christ's *body*. Not one bone in that mystical body shall ever be broken. The true Church is Christ's *bride*. They whom God has joined in everlasting covenant, shall never be put asunder. The true Church is Christ's *flock*. When the lion came and took a lamb out of David's flock, David arose and delivered the lamb from his mouth. Christ will do the same. He is David's greater son. Not a single sick lamb in Christ's flock shall perish! He will say to His Father in the last day, "I have not lost one of those you gave me!" The true Church is the *wheat* of the earth. It may be sifted, winnowed, buffeted, tossed to and fro. But not one gain shall be lost. The tares and chaff shall be burned. The wheat shall be gathered into the barn.

The true Church is Christ's *army*. The Captain of our salvation loses none of his soldiers. His plans are never defeated. His supplies never fail. His roll call is the same at the end—as it was at the beginning! Of the men that marched gallantly out of England a few years ago in the Crimean war, how many never came back! Regiments that went forth, strong and cheerful, with bands playing and banners flying, laid their bones in a foreign land, and never returned to their native country. But it is not so with Christ's army. Not one of His soldiers shall be missing at last. He Himself declares "They shall never perish."

The devil may cast some of the members of the true Church into prison. He may kill, and burn, and torture, and hang. But after he has killed the body, there is nothing more that he can do. He cannot hurt the soul. When the French troops took Rome a few years ago, they found on the walls of a prison cell, under the Inquisition, the words of a prisoner. Who he was, we do not know. But his words are worthy of remembrance. Though dead, he still speaks. He had written on the walls, very likely after an unjust trial, and a still more unjust excommunication, the following striking words, "*Blessed Jesus, they cannot cast me out of Your true Church!*" That record is true. Not all the power of Satan can cast out of Christ's true Church one single believer! The children of this world may wage fierce warfare against the Church, but they cannot stop the work of conversion.

What did the sneering Emperor Julian say, in the early ages of the Church, "What is the carpenter's son doing now?" An aged Christian made answer, "He is making a coffin for Julian himself." But a few months passed away, when Julian, with all his pomp and power, died in battle. Where was Christ when the fires of Smithfield were lighted, and when Latimer and Ridley were burnt at the stake? What was Christ doing then? He was still carrying on His work of building. That work will ever go on, even in troublesome times.

Fear not, beloved brethren, to begin serving Christ. He to whom you commit your souls has all power in heaven and earth, and He will keep you. He will never let you be cast away. *Relatives* may oppose. *Neighbors* may mock. The *world* may slander and sneer. Fear not! Fear not! The powers of hell shall never prevail against your soul. Greater is He who is for you—than all those who are against you.

Fear not for the Church of Christ, my brethren, when ministers die, and saints are taken away. Christ can ever maintain His own cause, He will raise up better and brighter stars. The stars are all in His right hand. Leave off all anxious thought about the future. Cease to be cast down by the measures of statesmen, or the plots of wolves in sheep's clothing. Christ will ever provide for His Own Church! Christ will take care that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it! All is going on well—though our eyes may not see it. The kingdoms of this world shall yet become the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ.

Allow me now to say a few words of **PRACTICAL APPLICATION** of this sermon. I speak to many, whom I speak to for the first time. I speak, perhaps, to many whom I speak to for the last time. Let not this service conclude without an effort to press home the sermon on each heart.

1. My first word of application shall be a QUESTION. What shall that question be? How shall I approach you? What shall I ask? I ask you, whether you are a member of the one true Church of Christ? Are you a member of the Church built upon the rock. I ask you, with all solemnity—Are you a member of that one Church of Christ? Are you joined to the great Foundation? Have you received the Holy Spirit? Does the Spirit witness with your spirit, that you are one with Christ, and Christ with you? I beseech you, in the name of God, to lay to heart this question, and to ponder it well. Take heed to yourselves, dear brethren, if you cannot give a satisfactory answer to my inquiry. Take heed, take heed, that you do not make shipwreck of faith. Take heed, lest at last the gates of hell prevail against you, the devil claim you as his own, and you be cast away forever. Take heed, lest you go down to the pit from the land of Bibles, and in the full light of Christ's Gospel.

2. My second word of application shall be an INVITATION. I address it to all who are not yet true believers. I say to you—Come and join the one true Church without delay. Come and join yourselves to the Lord Jesus Christ in an everlasting covenant not to be forgotten. Come to Christ and be saved. The day of decision must come some time. Why not this very evening? Why not today, while it is called today? Why not this very night, before the sun rises tomorrow morning? Come to my Master, Jesus Christ. Come, I say, for all things are now ready. Mercy is ready for you, heaven is ready for you, angels are ready to rejoice over you, Christ is ready to receive you. Christ will receive you gladly, and welcome you among His children. Come into the ark, the flood of God's wrath will soon break upon the earth, come into the ark and be safe. Come into the life-boat. The old world will soon break into pieces! Do you not hear the tremblings of it? The world is but a wreck stuck on the sandbar. The night is far spent—the waves are beginning to rise—the winds are rising—the storm will soon shatter the old wreck! But the life-boat is launched, and we, the ministers of the Gospel, beseech you to come into the life-boat and be saved.

Do you ask—How can I come, my sins are so many? Do you ask how you shall come? Hear the words of that beautiful hymn: "Just as I am: without one plea, But that Your blood was shed for me, And that You bid me come to Thee, O Lamb of God I come." That is the way to come to Christ. You should come, waiting for nothing, and tarrying for nothing. You should come, as a hungry sinner, to be filled; as a poor sinner to be enriched; as a vile, undeserving sinner to be clothed with righteousness. So coming, Christ would receive you. "Him that comes" to Christ, He "will not cast out." Oh! come, come to Jesus Christ!!

3. Last of all, let me given a word of EXHORTATION to my believing hearers. Live a holy life, my brethren. Walk worthy of the Church to which you belong. Live like citizens of heaven. Let your light shine before men, so that the world may profit by your conduct. Let them know whose you are, and whom you serve. Be epistles of Christ, known and read by all men; written in such clear letters, that none can say—we do not know whether he is a member of Christ or not. Live a courageous life, my brethren. Confess Christ before men. Whatever station you occupy, in that station confess Christ. Why should you be ashamed of Him? He was not ashamed of you on the cross. He is ready to confess you now before His Father in heaven. Why should you be ashamed of Him? Be bold. Be very bold. The good soldier is not ashamed of his uniform. The true believer ought never to be ashamed of Christ.

Live a joyful life, my brethren. Live like men who look for that blessed hope—the second coming of Jesus Christ. This is the prospect to which we should all look forward. It is not so much the thought of going to heaven, as of heaven coming to us, which should fill our minds. There is a good time coming for all the people of God—a good time for all the Church of Christ—a good time for all believers. But there is a bad time coming for the impenitent and unbelieving—a bad time for those who serve their own lusts, and turn their

backs on the Lord—but a good time for true Christians. For that good time, let us wait, and watch, and pray. The scaffolding will soon be taken down—the last stone will soon be brought out—the top-stone will be placed upon the edifice. In a little while, and the full beauty of the building shall be clearly seen. The great master Builder will soon come himself. A building shall be shown to assembled worlds, in which there shall be no imperfection. The *Savior* and the *saved* shall rejoice together. The whole universe shall acknowledge, that in the building of Christ's Church all was well done!

ONE BLOOD

by J. C. Ryle

"He made from **one blood** every nation of men to dwell on all the surface of the earth, having determined appointed seasons, and the boundaries of their dwellings" Acts 17:26

This is a very short and simple text, and even a child knows the meaning of its words. But simple as it is, it supplies food for much thought, and it forms part of a speech delivered by a great man on a great occasion.

The **speaker** is the Apostle of the Gentiles, Paul. The **hearers** are the cultivated men of Athens, and specially the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers. The **place** is Mars' Hill at Athens, in full view of religious buildings and statues, of which even the shattered remains are a marvel of art at this day. Never perhaps were such a place, such a man, and such an audience brought together! It was a strange scene. And how did Paul use the occasion? What did this Jewish stranger, this member of a despised nation, coming from an obscure corner of Asia, this little man whose "bodily presence was weak," and very unlike the ideal figure in one of Raphael's paintings—what does he say to these intellectual Greeks?

He tells them boldly the unity of the true God. There is only one God, the maker of heaven and earth, and not many deities, as his hearers seem to think, a God who needed no temples made with hands, and was not to be represented by images made of wood or metal or stone.

Standing in front of the stately Parthenon and the splendid statue of Minerva, he sets before his refined hearers the ignorance with which they worshiped—the folly of idolatry—the coming judgment of all mankind—the certainty of a resurrection—and the absolute need of repentance. And not least, he tells the proud men of Athens that they must not flatter themselves that they were superior beings, as they vainly supposed, made of finer clay, and needing less than other races of men. No! he declares that "God has made of one blood all nations." There is no difference. The nature, the needs, the obligation to God of all human beings on the globe are one and the same.

I shall stick to that expression "one blood," and confine myself entirely to it. I see in it three great points—

1. A point of fact.

2. A point of doctrine.

3. A point of duty.

Let me try to unfold them.

I. In the first place comes the point of FACT. We are all made "of one blood." Then the Bible account of the origin of man is true. The Book of Genesis is right. The whole family of mankind, with all its thousand millions, has descended from one pair—from Adam and Eve.

This is a humbling fact, no doubt—but it is true. Kings and their subjects, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, prince and pauper, the educated Englishman and the untutored African, the fashionable lady of London and the North American squaw—all, all might trace their pedigree, if they could trace it through sixty centuries, to one man and one woman. No doubt in the vast period of six thousand years immense varieties of races have gradually been developed. Hot climates and cold climates have affected the color and physical peculiarities of nations. Civilization and culture have produced their effect on the habits, demeanor, and mental attainments of the inhabitants of different parts of the globe. Some of Adam's children in the lapse of time have been greatly degraded, and some have been raised and improved. But the great fact remains the same. The story written by Moses is true. All the dwellers in Europe, Asia, Africa, and America originally sprang from Adam and Eve. We were all "made of one blood."

Now why do I dwell on all this? I do it because I wish to impress on the minds of my readers the plenary inspiration and divine authority of the Book of Genesis. I want you to hold fast the old teaching about the origin of man, and to refuse steadily to let it go.

I need hardly remind you that you live in a day of abounding skepticism and unbelief. Clever writers and lecturers are continually pouring contempt on the Old Testament Scriptures, and especially on the Book of Genesis. The contents of that venerable document, we are frequently told, are not to be read as real historical facts, but as fictions and fables. We are not to suppose that Adam and Eve were the only man and woman originally created, and that all mankind sprang from one pair. We are rather to believe that different races of human beings have been called into existence in different parts of the globe, at different times, without any relationship to one another. In short, we are coolly informed that the narratives in the first half of Genesis are only pleasing Oriental romances, and are not realities at all! Now, when you hear such talk as this, I charge you not to be moved or shaken for a moment. Stand fast in the old paths of the faith, and especially about the origin of man. There is abundant evidence that Moses is right, and those who impugn his veracity and credibility are wrong. We are all descended from one fallen father. We are "all of one blood."

It would be easy to show, if the limits of this paper permitted, that the oldest traditions of nations all over the globe confirm the account given by Moses in the most striking manner. Geikie, in his 'Hours with the Bible', has briefly shown that the story of the first

pair, the serpent, the fall, the flood, and the ark are found cropping up in one form or another in almost every part of the habitable world. But the strongest proof of our common origin is to be found in the painful uniformity of man's moral nature, whatever be the color of his skin. Go where you will on the globe, and observe what men and women are everywhere. Go to the heart of Africa or China, or to the remotest island of the Pacific Ocean, and mark the result of your investigations. I boldly assert that everywhere, and in every climate, you will find the moral nature of the human race exactly the same. Everywhere you will find men and women are naturally wicked, corrupt, selfish, proud, lazy, deceitful, godless— servants of lusts and passions.

And I contend that nothing can reasonably account for this but the first three chapters of Genesis. We are what we are morally, because we have sprung from one parent, and partake of his nature. We are all descendants of one fallen Adam, and in Adam we all died. Moses is right. We are all of "one blood."

After all, if doubt remains in any man's mind, and he cannot quite believe the narratives of Genesis, I ask him to remember what a deadly blow his unbelief strikes at the authority of the New Testament. It is easy work to point out difficulties in the first book of the Bible; but it is not easy to explain away the repeated endorsement which Genesis receives from Christ and the Apostles. There is no getting over the broad fact that creation, the serpent, the fall, Cain and Abel, Enoch, Noah, the flood, the ark, Abraham, Lot, Sodom and Gomorrah, Isaac, Jacob, Esau, are all mentioned in the New Testament as historical things or historical persons. What shall we say to this fact? Were Christ and the Apostles deceived and ignorant? The idea is absurd. Did they dishonestly accommodate themselves to the popular views of their hearers, in order to procure favor with them, knowing all the time that the things and persons they spoke of were fictitious, and not historical at all? The very idea is wicked and profane. We are shut up to one conclusion, and I see no alternative.

If you give up the Old Testament, you must give up the New also. There is no standing-ground between disbelief of the supernatural narratives of Genesis and disbelief of the gospel. If you cannot believe Moses, you ought not to trust Christ and the Apostles, who certainly did believe him. Are you really wiser than the Lord Jesus Christ or Paul? Do you know better than they? Cast such notions behind your back. Stand firm on the old foundation, and be not carried away by modern theories. And as a great cornerstone, place beneath your feet the fact of our text, the common origin of all mankind. "We are all made of one blood."

II. From the point of fact in our text I now pass on to the point of DOCTRINE. Are we all of "one blood"? Then we all need one and the same remedy for the great family disease of our souls. The disease I speak of is sin. We inherit it from our parents, and it is a part of our nature. We are born with it, whether gentle or simple, learned or unlearned, rich or poor, as children of fallen Adam, with his blood in our veins. It is a disease which grows with our growth and strengthens with our strength, and unless cured before we die, will be the death of our souls!

Now, what is the only remedy for this terrible spiritual disease? What will cleanse us from the guilt of sin? What will bring health and peace to our poor dead hearts, and enable us to walk with God while we live, and dwell with God when we die? To these questions I give a short but unhesitating reply. For the one universal soul-disease of all Adam's children there is only one remedy. That remedy is "the precious blood of Christ." To the blood of Adam we owe the beginning of our deadly spiritual ailment. To the blood of Christ alone must we all look for a cure.

When I speak of the "blood of Christ," my readers must distinctly understand that I do not mean the literal material blood which flowed from His hands and feet and side as He hung on the cross. That blood, I doubt not, stained the fingers of the soldiers who nailed our Lord to the tree; but there is not the slightest proof that it did any good to their souls. If that blood were really in the Communion cup at the Lord's Supper, as some profanely tell us, and we touched it with our lips, such mere physical touch would avail us nothing. Oh no! When I speak of the "blood" of Christ as the cure for the deadly ailment which we all inherit from the blood of Adam, I mean the life-blood which Christ shed, and the redemption which Christ obtained for sinners when He died for them on Calvary—the salvation which He procured for us by His vicarious sacrifice—the deliverance from the guilt and power and consequences of sin, which He purchased when He suffered as our Substitute.

This and this only is what I mean when I speak of "Christ's blood" as the one medicine needed by all Adam's children. The thing that we all need to save us from eternal death is not merely Christ's incarnation and life—but Christ's death. The atoning "blood" which Christ shed when He died, is the grand secret of salvation. It is the blood of the second Adam suffering in our stead, which alone can give life or health and peace to all who have the first Adam's blood in their veins.

I can find no words to express my deep sense of the importance of maintaining in our Church the true doctrine of the blood of Christ. One plague of our age is the widespread dislike to sound doctrine. In the place of it, the idol of the day is a kind of **jelly-fish Christianity**--a Christianity without bone, or muscle, or sinew--without any distinct teaching about the atonement or the work of the Spirit, or justification, or the way of peace with God--a **vague, foggy, misty Christianity**, of which the only watchwords seem to be, "You must be liberal and kind. You must condemn no man's doctrinal views. You must think everybody is right, and nobody is wrong."

And this Creedless kind of religion, we are actually told, is to give us peace of conscience! And not to be satisfied with it in a sorrowful, dying world, is a proof that you are very narrow-minded! Satisfied, indeed! Such a religion might possibly do for unfallen angels. But to tell sinful, dying men and women, with the blood of our father Adam in their veins, to be satisfied with it, is an insult to common sense, and a mockery of our distress. We need something far better than this. We need the blood of Christ.

What says the Scripture about "that blood"? Let me try to put my readers in remembrance. Do we want to be clean and guiltless now in the sight of God? It is written that "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin"—that "it justifies"—that "it makes us near to God"— that "through it there is redemption, even the forgiveness of sin"—that it "purges the conscience"—that "it makes peace between God and man"—that it gives "boldness to enter into the holiest." Yes! it is expressly written of the saints in glory, that "they had washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb," and that they had "overcome their souls' enemies by the blood of the Lamb" (1 John 1:7; Col. 1:20; Heb. 10:19; Eph. 1:7; Heb. 9:14; Eph. 2:13; Rom. 5:9; Rev. 7:14).

Why, in the name of common sense, if the Bible is our guide to heaven, why are we to refuse the teaching of the Bible about Christ's blood, and turn to other remedies for the great common soul-disease of mankind? If, besides this, the sacrifices of the Old Testament

did not point to the sacrifice of Christ's death on the cross, they were useless, unmeaning forms, and the outer courts of tabernacle and temple were little better than shambles. But if, as I firmly believe, they were meant to lead the minds of Jews to the better sacrifice of the true Lamb of God, they afford unanswerable confirmation of the position which I maintain this day. That position is, that **the one "blood of Christ" is the spiritual medicine for all who have the "one blood of Adam" in their veins.**

Does any reader of this paper want to do good in the world? I hope that many do. He is a poor style of Christian who does not wish to leave the world better, when he leaves it, than it was when he entered it. Take the advice I give you this day. Beware of being content with half-measures and inadequate remedies for the great spiritual disease of mankind. You will only labor in vain if you do not show men the blood of the Lamb. Like the fabled Sisyphus, however much you strive, you will find the stone ever rolling back upon you.

Education, sobriety, cleaner dwellings, popular concerts, blue ribbon leagues, white cross armies, penny readings, museums, all are very well in their way; but they only touch the surface of man's disease—they do not go to the root. They cast out the devil for a little season; but they do not fill his place, and prevent him coming back again. Nothing will do that but the story of the cross applied to the conscience by the Holy Spirit, and received and accepted by faith. Yes! it is the blood of Christ—not His example only, or His beautiful moral teaching, but His vicarious sacrifice that meets the needs of the soul. No wonder that Peter calls it "precious." Precious it has been found by the heathen abroad, and by the noble and the peasant at home. Precious it was found on a death-bed by the mighty theologian Bengel, by the unwearied laborer John Wesley, by the late Archbishop Longley, and Bishop Hamilton in our own days. May it ever be precious in our eyes! If we want to do good, we must make much of the blood of Christ. There is only one fountain that can cleanse any one's sin. That fountain is the blood of the Lamb.

III. The third and last point which arises out of our text is a point of DUTY. Are we all of "one blood"? Then we ought to live as if we were. We ought to behave as members of one great family. We ought to "love as brethren." We ought to put away from us anger, wrath, malice, quarreling, as specially hateful in the sight of God. We ought to cultivate kindness and charity towards all men. The dark-skinned African, the dirtiest dweller in some vile slum of London, has a claim upon our attention. He is a relative and a brother, whether we like to believe it or not. Like ourselves, he is a descendant of Adam and Eve, and inherits a fallen nature and a never-dying soul.

Now what are we Christians doing to prove that we believe and realize all this? What are we doing for our brethren? I trust we do not forget that it was wicked Cain who asked that awful question, "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Gen. 4:9).

What are we doing for the heathen abroad? That is a grave question, and one which I have no room to consider fully. I only remark that we do far less than we ought to do. The nation whose proud boast it is that her flag is to be seen in every port on the globe, gives less to the cause of foreign missions than the cost of a single first-class ironclad man-of-war.

But what are we doing for the masses at home? That is a far graver question, and one which imperiously demands a reply. The heathen are out of sight and out of mind. The English masses are near by our own doors, and their condition is a problem which politicians and philanthropists are anxiously trying to solve, and which cannot be evaded. What are we doing to lessen the growing sense of inequality between rich and poor, and to fill up the yawning gulf of discontent? Socialism, and communism, and confiscation of property are looming large in the distance, and occupying much attention in the press. Atheism and secularism are spreading fast in some quarters, and specially in overgrown and neglected parishes, Now what is the path of duty?

I answer without hesitation, that we need a larger growth of brotherly love in the land. We need men and women to grasp the great principle, that we are all of "one blood," and to lay themselves out to do good. We need the rich to care more for the poor, and the employer for the employed, and wealthy congregations for the working-class congregations in the great cities, and the West End of London to care more for the East and the South. And, let us remember, it is not merely temporal relief that is needed. The Roman emperors tried to keep the proletarians and the lower classes quiet by the circus games and donations of food. And some ignorant modern Britons seem to think that money, cheap food, good dwellings, and recreation are healing medicines for the evils of our day in the lowest stratum of society. It is a complete mistake. What the masses need is more sympathy, more kindness, more brotherly love, more treatment as if they were really of "one blood" with ourselves. Give them that, and you will fill up half the gulf of discontent.

It is a common saying in this day, that the working classes have no religion, that they are alienated from the Church of England, that they cannot be brought to church, and that it is hopeless and useless to try to do them good. I believe nothing of the kind. I believe the working classes are not one jot more opposed to religion than the "upper ten thousand," and that they are just as open to good influences, and even more likely to be saved if they are approached in the right way. But what they do like is to be treated as "one blood," and what is needed is a great increase of sympathy and personal friendly dealing with them.

I confess that I have immense faith in the power of sympathy and kindness. I believe the late Judge Talfourd hit the right nail on the head when he said, in almost his last charge to a Grand Jury at Stafford Court, "Gentlemen, the great need of the age is more sympathy between classes." I entirely agree with him; I think an increase of sympathy and fellow-feeling between high and low, rich and poor, employer and employed, parson and people, is one healing medicine which the age demands.

Sympathy, exhibited in its perfection, was one secondary cause of the acceptance which Christ's gospel met with on its first appearance in the heathen world. Well says Lord Macaulay, "It was before Deity taking a human form, walking among men, partaking of their infirmities, leaning on their bosoms, weeping over their graves, slumbering in the manger, bleeding on the cross, that the prejudices of the synagogue, and the doubts of the academy, and the swords of thirty legions, were humbled in the dust." And sympathy, I firmly believe, can do as much in the nineteenth century as it did in the first. If anything will melt down the cold isolation of classes in these latter days, and make our social body consist of solid cubes compacted together, instead of spheres only touching each other at one point, it will be a large growth of Christlike sympathy.

Now I assert confidently that the English working man is peculiarly open to sympathy. The working man may live in a poor dwelling; and after toiling all day in a coal pit, or cotton mill, or iron foundry, or dock, or chemical works, he may often look very rough and dirty. But after all, he is flesh and blood like ourselves. Beneath his outward roughness he has a heart and a conscience, a keen sense of justice, and a jealous recollection of his rights as a man and a Briton. He does not want to be patronized and flattered, any more than to be trampled on, scolded, or neglected; but he does like to be dealt with as a brother, in a friendly, kind, and sympathizing way.

He will not be driven; he will do nothing for a cold, hard man, however clever he may be.

But give him a Christian visitor to his home who really understands that it is the heart and not the coat which makes the man, and that the guinea's worth is in the gold, and not in the stamp upon it. Give him a visitor who will not only talk about Christ, but sit down in his house, and take him by the hand in a Christlike, familiar way. Give him a visitor, and specially a clergyman, who realizes that in Christ's holy religion there is no respect of persons, that rich and poor are "made of one blood," and need one and the same atoning blood, and that there is only one Savior, and one Fountain for sin, and one heaven, both for employers and employed. Give him a clergyman who can weep with those who weep, and rejoice with those who rejoice, and feel a tender interest in the cares, and troubles, and births, and marriages, and deaths of the humblest dweller in his parish. Give the working man, I say, a clergyman of that kind, and, as a general rule, the working man will come to his church, and not be a communist or an infidel. Such a clergyman will not preach to empty benches.

How little, after all, do most people seem to realize the supreme importance of brotherly love and the absolute necessity of imitating that blessed Savior who "went about doing good" to all, if we would prove ourselves His disciples! If ever there was a time when conduct like that of the good Samaritan in the parable was rare, it is the time in which we live. Selfish indifference to the needs of others is a painful characteristic of the age. Search the land in which we live, from the Isle of Wight to Berwick-on-Tweed, and from the Land's End to the North Foreland, and name, if you can, a single county or town in which the givers to good works are not a small minority, and in which philanthropic and religious agencies are not kept going, only and entirely, by painful begging and constant importunity. Go where you will, the report is always the same. Hospitals, missions at home and abroad, evangelistic and educational agencies, churches, chapels, and mission halls—all are incessantly checked and hindered by lack of support.

Where are the Samaritans, we may well ask, in this land of Bibles and Testaments? Where are the Christians who live as if we are "all of one blood"? Where are the men who love their neighbors, and will help to provide for dying bodies and souls? Where are the people always ready and willing to give unasked, and without asking how much others have given? **Millions are annually spent on sports, and hunting, and yachting, and racing, and gambling, and balls, and theaters, and dressing, and pictures, and furniture, and recreation. Little, comparatively, ridiculously little, is given or done for the cause of Christ.** A miserable guinea subscription too often is the whole sum bestowed by some Croesus on the bodies and souls of his fellow-men. The very first principles of giving seem lost and forgotten in many quarters. People must be bribed and tempted to contribute by bazaars, as children in badly-managed families are bribed and tempted to be good by sugar-plums! They must not be expected to give unless they get something in return! **And all this goes on in a country where people call themselves Christians, and go to church, and glory in ornate ceremonials, and theatrical performances, and what are called "peppy services,"** and profess to believe the parable of the Good Samaritan. I fear there will be a sad waking up at the last day.

Where, after all, to come to the root of the matter, where is that brotherly love which used to be the distinguishing mark of the primitive Christians? Where, amid the din of controversy and furious strife of parties, where is the fruit of the Holy Spirit and the primary mark of spiritual regeneration? Where is that charity, without which we are no better than "sounding brass and tinkling cymbals"? Where is the charity which is the bond of perfectness? Where is that love by which our Lord declared all men should know His disciples, and which John said was the distinction between the children of God and the children of the devil? Where is it, indeed?

Read in the newspapers the frightfully violent language of opposing politicians. Mark the hideous bitterness of controversial theologians, both in the press and on the platform. Observe the fiendish delight with which anonymous letter-writers endeavor to wound the feelings of opponents, and then to pour vitriol into the wound. Look at all this ghastly spectacle which any observing eye may see any day in England. And then remember that this is the country in which men are reading the New Testament and professing to follow Christ, and to believe that they are all of "one blood." Can anything more grossly inconsistent be conceived? Can anything be imagined more offensive to God? Truly, it is astonishing that such myriads should be so keen about Christian profession and external worship, and yet so utterly careless about the simplest elements of Christian practice. Where there is no love there is no spiritual life. Without brotherly love, although baptized and communicants, men are dead in trespasses and sins.

I shall wind up all I have to say on the point of duty by reminding my readers of the SOLEMN WORDS which Matthew records to have been spoken by our Lord in the twenty-fifth chapter of his Gospel. In the great and dreadful day of judgment, when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of His glory, there are some to whom He will say, "Depart from Me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the Devil and his angels! For I was hungry and you gave Me nothing to eat; I was thirsty and you gave Me nothing to drink; I was a stranger and you didn't take Me in; I was naked and you didn't clothe Me, sick and in prison and you didn't take care of Me.' "Then they too will answer, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or without clothes, or sick, or in prison, and not help You?' "Then He will answer them, 'I assure you: Whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for Me either.' "And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." (Matthew 25:41-46)

I declare I know very few passages of Scripture more solemn and heart-searching than this. It is not charged against these unhappy lost souls, that they had committed murder, adultery, or theft, or that they had not been church-goers or communicants. Oh, no! nothing of the kind. **They had simply done nothing at all.** They had neglected love to others. They had not tried to lessen the misery, or increase the happiness, of this sin-burdened world. They had selfishly sat still, done no good, and had no eyes to see, or hearts to feel, for their brethren the members of Adam's great family. And so their end is everlasting punishment! If these words cannot set some people thinking when they look at the state of the masses in some of our large towns, nothing will.

And now I shall close this paper with three words of FRIENDLY ADVICE, which I commend to the attention of all who read it. They are words in season for the days in which we live, and I am sure they are worth remembering.

(a) First and foremost, I charge you never to give up the old doctrine of the plenary inspiration of the whole Bible. Hold it fast, and never let it go. Let nothing tempt you to think that any part of the grand old volume is not inspired, or that any of its narratives, and especially in Genesis, are not to be believed. Once take up that ground, and you will find yourself on an inclined plane. Well will it be if you do not slip down into utter infidelity! Faith's difficulties no doubt are great; but the difficulties of skepticism are far greater.

(b) In the next place, I charge you never to give up the old doctrine of the blood of Christ, the complete satisfaction which that atoning blood made for sin, and the impossibility of being saved except by that blood. Let nothing tempt you to believe that it is

enough to look at the example of Christ, or to receive the sacrament which Christ commanded to be received, and which many nowadays worship like an idol. When you come to your deathbed, you will need something more than an example and a sacrament. Take heed that you are found resting all your weight on Christ's substitution for you on the cross, and His atoning blood, or it will be better if you had never been born.

(c) Last but not least, I charge you never to neglect the duty of brotherly love, and practical, active, sympathetic kindness towards every one around you, whether high or low, or rich or poor. Try daily to do some good upon earth, and to leave the world a better world than it was when you were born. If you are really a child of God, strive to be like your Father and your great elder Brother in heaven. For Christ's sake, do not be content to have religion for yourself alone. Love, charity, kindness, and sympathy are the truest proofs that we are real members of Christ, genuine children of God, and rightful heirs of the kingdom of heaven.

Of "one blood" we were all born. In "one blood" we all need to be washed. To all partakers of Adam's "one blood" we are bound, if we love life, to be charitable, sympathizing, loving, and kind. The time is short. We are going, going—and shall soon be gone to a world where there is no evil to remedy—and no scope for works of mercy. Then for Christ's sake let us all try to do some good before we die, and to lessen the sorrows of this sin-burdened world.

To Whom?

J. C. Ryle, 1880

"Then Simon Peter answered Him, Lord, **to whom** shall we go? You have the words of eternal life!" John 6:68.

The chapter containing the text which heads this page, is singularly rich in matter.

It begins, we must remember, with that well-known miracle, the feeding of five thousand men with five loaves and two fish—a miracle which some early writers call the greatest which Christ ever worked—the only miracle which all the four Evangelists alike record—a miracle which exhibited creative power.

It goes on to show us another miracle of hardly less striking character, the walking of Christ on the waters of the sea of Galilee—a miracle which exhibited our Lord's power, when He thought fit, to suspend the so-called laws of nature. It was as easy for Him to walk on the water as it had been to create land and sea at the beginning.

The chapter then carries us on to that wonderful discourse in the synagogue of Capernaum, which John alone, of all the four Gospel writers, was inspired to give to the world. Christ, the true bread of life—the privileges of all who come to Him and believe—the deep mystery of eating Christ's flesh and drinking Christ's blood, and the life which that flesh and blood convey—what a wealth of precious truth lies here! How great the debt which the Church owes to the fourth Gospel!

And, finally, as the chapter draws to a close, we have the noble outburst of the warm-hearted Apostle Peter—"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." In this remarkable verse there are three points to which I now propose to invite the attention of all into whose hands this paper may fall.

I. In the first place, I ask you to observe **the occasion of these words being spoken**. What made this fiery, impulsive disciple cry out, "To whom shall we go?" The verses which precede our text supply an answer. "From that time **many went back**, and walked no more with Him. Then Jesus said to the twelve—Will you also go away?"

There you have recorded a melancholy and most instructive fact. Even from Christ Himself, who "spoke as never any man spoke," and did works of matchless power, and lived as no one ever lived—holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners—even from Christ many, after following Him for a time, went away. Yes! many, not a few, many in the noontide blaze of miracles and sermons, such as earth had never seen or heard before, many turned away from Christ, left Him, deserted Him, gave up His blessed service, and went back—some to Judaism—some to the world—and some, we may fear, to their sins. "If they did these things in a green tree, what may we expect in a dry?" If men could forsake Christ then—we have no right to be surprised if His erring, weak ministers are forsaken also in these last days.

But why did these men go back? Some of them, probably, went back because they had not counted the cost, and "when tribulation or persecution arose because of the word" they were offended. Some of them went back because they had totally misunderstood the nature of our Lord's kingdom, and had dreamed only of temporal advantages and rewards. Most of them, however, it is very clear, went back because they could not receive the deep doctrine which had just been proclaimed—I mean the doctrine that "eating Christ's flesh and drinking Christ's blood" are absolutely necessary to salvation. It is the old story. As it was in the beginning, so it will be to the end. There is nothing which the dark, natural heart of man dislikes so much as the so-called "blood theology." Cain turned away in his proud ignorance from the idea of vicarious sacrifice, and the Jews who fell away from our Lord, "went back" when they heard that they must "eat the flesh and drink the blood" of the Son of man.

But there is no denying the fact that these Jews who "went back" have never been without followers and imitators. Their succession, at any rate, has never ceased. Millions in every age have been admitted into the Church by baptism, and begun life as professing Christians, and then, on coming to adulthood, have turned their back altogether on Christ and Christianity. Instead of "continuing Christ's faithful soldiers and servants," they have become servants of sin, the world, and unbelief. The defection is continually going on—it is an old disease, and must not surprise us. The **heart** is always deceitful and desperately wicked; the **devil** is always busy, and seeking whom he may devour; the **world** is always ensnaring; the **way** of life is narrow, the **enemies** many, the friends few, the **difficulties** great, the **cross** heavy, the **doctrine** of the gospel offensive to the natural man. What thoughtful person need wonder that multitudes in every age go back from Christ? They are brought within the outward fold of the Church in childhood, and then, on coming to manhood, they throw off all religion, and perish miserably in the wilderness.

Yet I am bold to say that the disposition to go back from Christ was never so strong as it is in these days. Never were the objections to vital Christianity so many, so plausible, and so specious. For it is an age of free thought and liberty of action—an age of scientific inquiry, and determination to question and cross-examine ancient opinions—an age of greedy pursuit of pleasure and impatience of restraint—an age of idolatry of intellect, and extravagant admiration of so-called cleverness—an age of Athenian craving for novelty and constant love of change—an age when we see on all sides a bold but ever shifting skepticism, which at one time tells us that man is little better than an ape, and at another that he is little less than a god—an age when there is a morbid readiness to accept the shallowest arguments in favor of unbelief, and a simultaneous lazy unwillingness to investigate the great fundamental evidences of Divine revelation. And, worst of all, it is an age of spurious liberality, when, under the high-sounding phrases of "No party spirit! no bigotry!" and the like, men live and die without having any distinct opinions at all. In an age like this, can any thinking Christian wonder that departure from Christ is common? Let him cease to wonder, and not waste his time in complaints. Let him rather gird up his loins like a man, and do what he can to stay the plague. Let him set his feet down firmly in "the old paths," and remember that the defection he sees is only an old complaint in an aggravated form. Let him stand between the dead and living, and try to stop the mischief. Let him "cry aloud, and spare not." Let him say, "Stand to your colors; the battle of Christianity is not lost—will you also go away?"

I dare believe that many young people into whose hands this paper may fall are often severely tempted to go back from Christ. You launch forth into the world, perhaps, from quiet homes, where the primary truths of Christianity were never called in question for a moment, to hear all sorts of strange theories broached, and strange opinions advanced, which contradict the old principles which you have been taught to believe. You find to your astonishment that free thought and free handling of sacred subjects have reached such a pitch that the very foundations of faith seem shaken. You discover to your amazement that cleverness and religion do not always go together, and that it is possible for the highest intellect to be ready to thrust God out of His own world. Who can wonder if this state of things is a crude shock to the tender faith of many young persons, and that, reeling under it, they are tempted to go back from Christ, and throw away Christianity altogether?

Now, if any one who reads this paper is tempted in this fashion, I entreat him for Christ's sake to be firm, to play the man, and resist the temptation. Try to realize that there is nothing new in the state of things which now perplexes you. It is nothing but the old disease which has always plagued and tried the Church in every age, even from the day when Satan said to Eve, "You shall not surely die." **It is only the sifting process which God permits, in order to separate the wheat from the chaff, through which we must all pass.** The world after all, with its pitfalls and snares for the soul, with its competitions and struggles, its failures and successes, its disappointments and its perplexities, its perpetual crop of crude theories and extreme views, its mental conflicts and anxieties, its extravagant free thought, and its equally extravagant superstition—the world is a fiery furnace and ordeal, through which all believers must make up their minds to pass. The temptation to cast off your first faith and turn back from Christ is sure to meet you sooner or later, as it has met millions before, in one form or another. To realize that in resisting it you are only resisting an old and often beaten enemy of the soul, is one half the battle.

And, as I ask you not to be surprised at the temptation to leave Christ, so also I entreat you not to be shaken by it. What though scores of men you know give way under the assault, cast off their Christian armor, neglect their Bibles, misuse their Sundays, and live practically without God in the world? What though clever men, promising men, the sons of parents who never dreamed of such things, forsake the banner under which they were enrolled, and become mere *nothingarians*, or believers in nothing? Let none of these things move you. Set your face as a flint towards Jerusalem. Set your foot down firmly in the old paths, the good and tried way to the celestial city.

What fruit have the deserters to show compared to the followers of Peter, James, and John? What increase of inward peace and outward usefulness? What rest of conscience? What comfort in trial? No! while many go away from Christ, you must cleave to Him with purpose of heart. Cleave to your old habits of daily prayer and daily Bible reading, and regular attendance on means of grace. Better a thousand times to be on Christ's side with a few, and be laughed at and despised for a season, than to have the praise of the many for a few short years, and then awake too late to find that without Christ you are without peace, or hope, or heaven.

II. In the second place, let us **consider the question which Peter asked** in reply to his Master's appeal, "Will you also go away?" "Lord," cries the warm-hearted and impulsive Apostle. **"Lord, to whom shall we go?"** That question, no doubt, like hundreds in the Bible, was equivalent to a strong affirmation. "There is none beside You to whom we can go." It is like the saying of David, "Whom have I in heaven but You? and there is none on earth that I desire beside You" (Psalm 73:25).

When we think of the age when Peter lived, we cannot help feeling that he had abundant cause to ask that question. In his days, at the end of 4000 years, "the world by wisdom knew not God" (1 Co. 1:21). Egypt, Assyria, Greece, and Rome, the very nations which attained the highest excellence in secular things, in the things of religion were sunk in gross darkness. The fellow-countrymen of matchless historians, tragedians, poets, orators, and architects, worshiped idols, and bowed down to the work of their own hands. The ablest philosophers of Greece and Rome groped after truth like blind men, and wearied themselves in vain to find the door. The whole earth was defiled with spiritual ignorance and immorality, and the wisest men could only confess their need of light, like the Greek philosopher Plato, and groan and sigh for a deliverer. Peter might well cry, "Lord, if we leave You, to whom shall we go?"

Where, indeed, could the Apostle have turned for peace of heart, for satisfaction of conscience, for hope in a world to come, if he had gone away from the synagogue of Capernaum with the deserters, and left Christ 1854 years ago! Would he have found what he wanted among the formal Pharisees, or the skeptical Sadducees, or the worldly Herodians, or the ascetic Essenes, or the philosophical schools of Athens, Alexandria, or Rome? Would Gamaliel, or Caiaphas, or Stoics, or Epicureans, or Platonists, have quenched his spiritual thirst, or fed his soul? It is waste of time to ask such questions. All these pretended fountains of knowledge had long been proved to be man-made cisterns, broken cisterns, which could hold no water. They satisfied no anxious mind. He who drank of these waters soon thirsted again.

But the question which Peter asked is one which true Christians may always ask boldly, when they are tempted to go away from Christ. At this very day, when men tell us that Christianity is an effete and worn-out thing, we may safely challenge them to show us anything better. They may ply us, if they will, with objections to revealed religion, and say many things to which we can offer no reply. But, after all, we may confidently defy them to show us "a more excellent way," and more solid ground than that which is

occupied by the man who simply believes all the Bible, and follows Christ.

Grant for a moment, that in an hour of weakness we listen to the temptation to go away from Christ. Grant that we close our Bibles, reject all dogmas, and with a sublime contempt for the 'fossilized theology of our forefathers', content ourselves with a polished nothingarianism, or a few scraps of cold formality. In what respect shall we find that we have increased our happiness or usefulness? What solid thing shall we get to replace what we have left? Once turn your back on Christ, and where will you find peace for your conscience, strength for duty, power against temptation, comfort in trouble, support in the hour of death, hope in looking forward to the grave? You may well ask. Nothingarianism can give no answer. These things are only found by those who live the life of faith in a crucified and risen Christ.

To whom, indeed, shall we go for help, strength, and comfort, if we turn our backs on Christ? We live in a world of troubles, whether we like it or not. You can no more stave off and prevent them than king Canute could prevent the tide rising and rudely swelling round the royal chair. Our bodies are liable to a thousand ailments, and our hearts to a thousand sorrows. No creature on earth is so vulnerable, and so capable of intense physical as well as mental suffering, as man. Sickness, and death, and funerals, and partings, and separations, and losses, and failures, and disappointments, and private family trials, which no mortal eye sees, will break in upon us from time to time; and we desperately need help to meet them! Alas, where will thirsty, wailing hearts find such help if we leave Christ?

The plain truth is, that nothing but an almighty personal Friend will ever meet the legitimate needs of man's soul. Metaphysical notions, philosophical theories, abstract ideas, vague speculations about "the unseen, the infinite, the inner light," and so forth, may satisfy a select few for a time. But the vast majority of mankind, if they have any religion at all, will never be content with a religion which does not supply them with a Person to whom they may look and trust. It is just this craving after a person which gives the Mariolatry of Rome its curious power. And this principle once admitted, where will you find one so perfectly fitted to satisfy man as the Christ of the Bible? Look round the world, and point out, if you can, any object of faith fit to be compared with this blessed Son of God, set forth before our eyes in the Gospels. In face of a dying world we need positives and not negatives. "To whom shall we go, if we go away from Christ?"

Men may tell us, if they please, that our old fountain of living waters is drying up, and that the nineteenth century needs a new theology. But I fail to see evidence to confirm this assertion. I see multitudes of men and women all over the world, after 1800 years, continuing to drink at this fountain; and none who honestly stoop to drink, complain that their thirst is not relieved. And all this time, those who profess to despise the good old fountain can show us nothing whatever to take its place. The mental freedom and higher light they promise are as deceptive as the mirage of the African desert, and as unreal as a dream. A substitute for the old fountain exists nowhere, but in man's imagination. He who leaves it will find that he must return, or perish of thirst.

Perhaps some of my younger readers may secretly think that the difficulties of revealed religion are inexplicable, and are trying to persuade themselves that they know not "where to go" in these dark and cloudy days. I entreat them to consider that the difficulties of unbelief are far greater than the difficulties of faith. When men have said all they can to depreciate the old paths of the Bible, and draw you away from Christ—when they have piled up the ancient, stale objections of various readings, doubtful authorship, inconsistent statements, and supposed incredible miracles, they can still offer no substitute for the Scripture, or answer the question, "To whom shall we go?" There still remains the great, broad fact that the leading evidences of revelation have never been overthrown, that **we are weak creatures in a sorrowful world, and need a helping hand, which Christ alone holds out**, and which millions for eighteen centuries have found, and are finding, sufficient. The great argument of probability is entirely on our side. Surely it is wiser to cling to Christ and Christianity, with all its alleged difficulties, than to launch on an ocean of uncertainties, and travel towards the grave hopeless, comfortless, and professing to know nothing at all about the unseen world.

And, after all, departure from Christ on account of the supposed hardness of certain doctrines will secure no immunity from mental conflicts. The problems of Christianity may seem great and deep; but the problems of unbelief are greater and deeper still. And not the least problem is the impossibility of answering the question, "Shall I find elsewhere any real peace or rest of soul, if I leave Christ? To whom shall I go? Where in all the world shall I find a more excellent way than that of faith in Jesus? Where is the personal friend who will supply His place?"

Give me a thousand times rather the old Evangelical Christianity, with all its difficult facts and doctrines, the incarnation, the atonement, the resurrection, the ascension, than the cold, barren creed of the Socinian or the Deist, or the cheerless negations of modern unbelief. Give me the religion of texts and hymns and simple faith, which satisfies thousands, rather than the dreary void of speculative philosophy, which thoroughly satisfies none.

III. Let us consider, lastly, **the noble declaration** which Peter makes in our text. "You have the words of eternal life!"

I do not for a moment suppose that the Apostle fully grasped the meaning of the words which he here used. It would be inconsistent with all that we read of his knowledge, before our Lord's resurrection, to suppose that he did. It may well be doubted whether he meant more than this—"You are the true Messiah; You are the promised Prophet like unto Moses, of whom it is written, I will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak unto them all that I shall command Him" (Deu. 18:18). I believe that well-known text was in Peter's mind, though he did not yet realize its wealth of meaning.

But of one thing we may be very sure. That expression "eternal life" must have been very familiar to him and all the twelve, while Jesus went in and out among them I suspect that there were few days when they did not hear it fall from His lips, and they caught it up if they did not fully understand it. In the brief record of our Lord's teaching, contained in the four Gospels, you have it twenty-five times. In John's Gospel alone it occurs seventeen times. In this very sixth chapter we read it five times over. No doubt it was ringing in Peter's ears when he spoke.

But though Peter "knew not what he said" that day, there came a day when his understanding was opened, after his Lord's resurrection, and he saw heights and depths in the "words of eternal life" which before the crucifixion he only saw "through a glass darkly." And we, in the full light of the Acts and Epistles, need feel no doubt whatever as to the things which this mighty phrase, which our Lord so often used, included.

Christ's words of eternal life were words about the nature of that life which He came into the world to proclaim—a life begun in the soul by faith while we live—and perfected in glory when we die. They were words about the way in which this eternal life is provided for sinful man—even the way of His atoning death, as our Substitute, on the cross. They were words about the terms on which this eternal life is made our own, if we feel our need of it, even the terms of simple faith. As Latimer said, it is but "believe and have." They were words about "the training and discipline on the way to eternal life, which are so much needed by man and so richly provided—even the renewing and sanctifying grace of the Holy Spirit. They were words about the comforts and encouragements by the way, laid up for all who believe to life everlasting—even Christ's daily help, sympathy, and watchful care. All this and much more, of which I cannot nosy speak particularly, is contained in that little phrase, "Words of eternal life." No wonder that our Lord says in a certain place, "I am come that they might have life, and have it more abundantly;" "I have given them the words that You gave Me" (John 10:10, John 17:8).

Let us consider for a moment what vast numbers of men and women, in these last eighteen centuries, have found these "words of eternal life" not merely "words," but solid realities. They have been persuaded of them, and embraced them, and found them food and drink to their souls. We are compassed about with a great cloud of witnesses, who in the faith of these words have lived happy and useful lives, and died glorious deaths. Where is he who will dare to deny this? Where shall we find such lives and deaths without Christ?

It was faith in Christ's "words of eternal life" which made Peter and John stand up boldly before the Jewish council, and confess their Master without fear of consequences, saying, "There is no other name given under heaven among men whereby we can be saved" (Acts 4:12).

It was faith in Christ's "words of eternal life" which made Paul come out from Judaism, spend his life in preaching the gospel, and say on the brink of the grave, "I know whom I have believed, and that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day" (2 Tim. 1:12).

It was faith in Christ's "words of eternal life" which made Bishop Hooper go boldly to the stake at Gloucester, after saying, "Life is sweet, and death is bitter; but eternal life is more sweet, and eternal death more bitter."

It was faith in Christ's "words of eternal life" which made Nicholas Ridley and Hugh Latimer endure a fiery death in Broad Street, Oxford, rather than deny the principles of the Reformation.

It was faith in Christ's "words of eternal life" which made Henry Martyn turn his back on ease and distinction at Cambridge, go forth to a tropical climate, and die a solitary death as a missionary.

It was faith in Christ's "words of eternal life" which made that honorable woman, Catherine Tait, as recorded in a most touching biography, resign five children in five weeks to the grave, in the full assurance that Christ would keep His word, take care of them both in body and soul, and bring them with Him to meet her at the last day.

What a fearful contrast to such facts as these appears in the lives and deaths of those who turn their backs on Christ, and seek other masters! What fruits can the advocates of non-Christian theories, and ideas, and principles, point to with all their cleverness? What holy, loving, peaceful quietness of spirit have they exhibited? What victories have they won over darkness, immorality, superstition, and sin? What successful missions have they carried on? What seas have they crossed? What countries have they civilized or moralized? What neglected home populations have they improved? What self-denying labors have they gone through? What deliverance have they wrought in the earth? You may well ask; you will get no answer. No wonder our Lord said of false prophets, "By their fruits you shall know them" (Mat. 7:15-16). It is only those who can say with Peter, "You have the words of eternal life," who make a mark on mankind while they live, and say, "O death, where is your sting?" when they die.

(a) In conclusion, I entreat every one who reads this paper to ask himself whether he is going away from Christ, like the Jews, or clinging boldly to Christ, like Peter. You live in dangerous days. There was a time when irreligion was scarcely respectable; but that time has long ceased to be. But even now Christ continues to knock at the door of your hearts, and asks you to ponder your ways and take heed what you do. "Will you go away?" Dare to set up an assize in your heart of hearts, and look within. Resist the lazy Epicurean feeling which bids you never scrutinize your inward character. Depend on it, an hour will come when you will feel the need of a great Friend in heaven. Without Him you may live tolerably—without Him you will never die comfortably.

You may tell me, perhaps, that you do not really mean to forsake Christ—although you are not at present all that you ought to be. But there are some things in religion about which you cannot make up your mind, and are waiting for more light. Or you are working hard for some special object, and have not time just now, and hope, like Felix, for "a convenient season." But, oh! waiting, lingering soul, what is neglect of Christ's word, and ordinances, and day, but "going away from Christ"? Awake to see that you are on an descendent slope—and are gradually going downward. You are drifting, drifting daily, further, further away from God. Awake, and resolve, by God's help, to drift no more.

(b) But, next to having no religion at all, I entreat every reader of this paper to beware of a religion in which Christ has not His rightful place. Let us never try to satisfy ourselves with a little cheap, formal Christianity, taken up carelessly on Sunday morning, and laid aside at night, but not influencing us during the week. Such Christianity will neither give us peace in life, nor hope in death, nor power to resist temptation, nor comfort in trouble. Christ alone has "the words of eternal life," and His words must be received, believed, embraced, and made the food and drink of our souls. A Christianity without living, felt communion with Him, without grasp of the benefits of His blood and intercession, a Christianity without Christ's sacrifice and Christ's Priesthood, is a powerless, wearisome form.

(c) Let us, finally, "hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering," if we have reason to hope we are Christ's true servants. Let men laugh at us, and try to turn us away as much as they please. Let us calmly and humbly say to ourselves at such times—"After all, to whom can I go if I leave Christ? I feel within that He has the words of eternal life. I see that thousands find them food and drink to their souls. Where He goes, I will go; and where He lodges, I will lodge. In a dying world, I can see nothing better. I will cling to Christ and His words. They never failed anyone who trusted them, and I believe they will not fail me."

PORTRAITS

by J. C. Ryle

Acts 26:24-29— As Paul was saying these things in his defense, Festus said with a loud voice, "Paul, you are out of your mind; your great learning is driving you out of your mind." But Paul said, "I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I am speaking true and rational words. For the king knows about these things, and to him I speak boldly. For I am persuaded that none of these things has escaped his notice, for this has not been done in a corner. King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you believe." And Agrippa said to Paul, "In a short time would you persuade me to be a Christian?" And Paul said, "Whether short or long, I would to God that not only you but also all who hear me this day might become such as I am—except for these chains."

There is a collection of pictures in London called the National Portrait Gallery. It contains the portraits of nearly all the great men who have made a mark in English history. It is well worth seeing. But I doubt whether it contains three portraits which deserve a more attentive study than the three which I am going to show you in this paper.

One striking feature of the Bible is the rich variety of its contents. That grand old Book, which for eighteen centuries has baffled the attacks of unfriendly critics, is not only a storehouse of doctrine, precept, history, poetry, and prophecy. The Holy Spirit has also given us a series of **lifelike portraits of human nature**, in all its various aspects, which deserve our attentive study. Who does not know that we often learn more from patterns and examples than from abstract statements?

The well-known piece of Scripture which heads this paper supplies an admirable illustration of my meaning. It forms the conclusion of the chapter in which the Apostle Paul makes a defense of himself before the Roman governor Festus and the Jewish king Agrippa. Three pictures of three very different men hang before us. They are types of three classes of men who are to be seen among us at this very day. Their succession has never ceased. **In spite of changing fashions, scientific discoveries, and political reforms, the inward heart of man in every age is always the same.** Come and let us stand before these three pictures, and see what we may learn.

I. Let us look, first, at **FESTUS, the Roman governor**. This is the man who abruptly broke in upon Paul's address, exclaiming, "Paul, you are beside yourself; much learning does make you mad."

Festus, no doubt, was a heathen, ignorant of any religion except the idolatrous temple-worship, which in the time of the Apostles overspread the civilized world. From the language he addressed to Agrippa in a preceding chapter, he seems to have been profoundly ignorant both of Judaism and Christianity. He spoke of "questions of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, who was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive" (Act. 25:19). Most probably, like many a proud Roman in the declining age of the Roman Empire, he regarded all religions with secret contempt, as all equally false, or equally true, and all alike unworthy of the notice of a great man. As for a Jew talking of showing "light to the Gentiles," the very idea was ridiculous! To keep in with the world, to have the favor of man, to care nothing for anything but the things seen, to please "my lord" Augustus—this was probably the whole religion of Porcius Festus.

Now, are there many among us like Festus? Yes! I fear there are tens of thousands. They are to be found in every rank and class of society. They walk in our streets. They travel with us in railway carriages. They meet us in our daily interaction with the world. They fill the various relations of life respectably. They are often good men of business, and eminent in the professions they have chosen. They discharge the various duties of their positions with credit, and leave a good name behind them, when their place is empty. But, like Festus, they have no religion!

These are they who seem to live as if they had no souls. From January to December, they appear neither to think, nor feel, nor see, nor know anything about a life to come. It forms no part of their schemes, and plans, and calculations. They live as if they had nothing to attend to but the body—nothing to do but to eat, and drink, and sleep, and dress, and get money, and spend money—and no world to provide for except the world which we see with our eyes.

These are they who seldom, if ever, use any means of grace, whether public or private. Praying and Bible-reading, and secret communion with God, are things which they despise and let alone. They may be very well for the aged, the sick, and the dying; for the clergy, the monk, and the nun; but not for them! If ever they attend a place of worship, it is only as a matter of form, to appear respectable; and too often they never attend except on the occasion of some great public ceremony, or at a wedding, or a funeral.

These are they who profess their inability to understand anything like zeal or earnestness about religion. They regard the Societies, the Institutions, the literature, the Evangelistic efforts of Christians, at home or abroad, with sublime contempt. Their maxim is to let everybody alone. The comparative claims of Church and Dissent, the strife of parties within our pale, the debates of Convocations, Congresses, and Diocesan Conferences, are all alike matters of indifference to them. They look coldly at them from a distance, and regard them as the childish struggles of weak folks, unworthy of the notice of a cultivated mind. And if such subjects are ever brought up in their company, they brush them away with some satirical remark, or some often-repeated old smart saying of skepticism.

Will any one deny that there are multitudes of people around us such as I have tried to describe—kind people, perhaps, moral people, good-natured people, easy to get on with, unless you get on the subject of religion? It is impossible to deny it. Their name is "legion," for they are many. The tendency of these latter days to make an idol of intellect—the desire to be independent and to think for yourself—the disposition to worship private judgment, to exalt your own isolated opinion, and to deem it finer and cleverer to go wrong with a few than right with a crowd, all this helps to swell the ranks of the followers of Festus. I fear he is the type of a large class.

Such people are a melancholy sight. They often remind me of some grand old ruin, like Melrose or Bolton Abbey, where enough remains of beauteous arches, and columns, and towers, and traceried windows to show what the building once was, and what it might have been now if God had not left it. But now all is cold, and silent, and gloomy, and suggestive of decay, because the Master of the house, the Lord of life, is not there. Just so it is with many of the followers of Festus. You often feel, when you observe their

intellectual power, their gifts of speech, their taste, their energy of character, "what men these might be if God had His rightful place in their souls!" But without God all is wrong. Alas, for the crushing power of unbelief and pride, when they get complete mastery of a man, and reign over him uncontrolled! No wonder that Scripture describes unconverted man as "blind—sleeping—beside himself—and dead."

Is Festus reading this paper today? I am afraid not! Religious tracts and books, like Sunday services and sermons, are not in his line. On Sundays, Festus probably reads the newspaper, or looks over his worldly accounts, or visits his friends, or goes a journey, and secretly wishes an English Sunday was more like a Continental one, and the theaters and museums were open. On week-days, Festus i s **constantly employed in business, or politics, or, recreations, or killing time in the trifling pursuits of modem society; and he lives like a butterfly, as thoughtless as if there were no such thing as death, or judgment, or eternity!** Oh, no—Festus is not the man to read this paper!

But is a man like Festus in a hopeless condition, and beyond the reach of mercy? No, indeed! I thank God he is not. He has yet got a conscience at the bottom of his character, which, however much seared, is not quite dead—a conscience which, like the great church bell at midnight, when the roar of city business is over, will sometimes make itself heard. Like Felix, and Herod, and Ahab, and Pharaoh, the followers of Festus have their times of visitation; and, unlike them, they sometimes awake before it is too late, and become different men. There are seasons in their lives when they are driven in upon themselves, and feel "the powers of the world to come," and find that mortal man cannot get on without God. Sickness, and solitude, and disappointments, and losses of money, and deaths of loved ones, can sometimes make the proudest hearts bow down, and confess that the "grasshopper is a burden." Manasseh is not the only one who "in time of affliction" turned to God, and began to pray. Yes! I have long felt that we must never despair of any one. The age of spiritual miracles is not past. With Christ and the Holy Spirit nothing is impossible. The last day will show that there were some who began with Festus and were like him, but at last turned around, repented, and ended with Paul. While there is life we must hope, and pray for others.

II. Let us now turn to a very different picture. Let us look at **King AGRIPPA**. This is the man who was so much struck by Paul's address that he said, "You almost persuade me to be a Christian."

"Almost!" Let me dwell for a moment on that expression. I am well aware that many think our Authorized English Version of the Bible is in fault here, and fails to give the true meaning of the original Greek. They assert that the phrase would be more correctly rendered, "In a short time," or "with weak and feeble argument you are persuading me." I am bold to say that I cannot accept the view of these critics, though I admit that the phrase is rather obscure. But in questions like these I dare not call any man master. I hold with several excellent commentators, both ancient and modern, that the translation given in our Authorized Version is right and correct. I am fortified in my belief by the fact that this is the view of one who thought, and spoke, and wrote in the language of the New Testament—I mean the famous Greek Father Chrysostom. And last, but not least, no other view appears to me to harmonize with the exclamation of the Apostle Paul in the verse which follows. "Almost!" he seems to say, taking up Agrippa's words. "I want you to be not almost—but altogether a Christian." On these grounds I stand by our Old Version.

Agrippa, whose picture now demands our attention, was in many respects very unlike Festus. Of Jewish extraction, and brought up among Jews, if not of pure Jewish blood, he was thoroughly familiar with many things of which the Roman governor was utterly ignorant. He knew and "believed the prophets." He must have understood many things in Paul's address, which were mere "words and names" and raving fancies to his companion in the place of hearing. He had a secret inward conviction that the man before him had truth on his side. He saw, and felt, and was moved, and affected, and conscience-stricken, and had inward wishes and longing desires. But he could get no further. He saw—but he had not courage to act. He felt—but he had not the will to move. He was not far from the kingdom of God—but he halted outside. He neither condemned nor ridiculed Christianity—but, like a man who is paralyzed, he could only look at it and examine it, and had not strength of mind to lay hold on it and receive it into his heart.

Now, are there many professing Christians like Agrippa? I fear there is only one answer to that question. They are an exceeding great army, a multitude which it is difficult to number. They are to be found in our churches, and are pretty regular attendants on all means of grace. They have no doubt of the truth of the Bible. They have not the slightest objection to the doctrines of the gospel. They know the difference between sound and unsound teaching. They admire the lives of holy people. They read good books, and give money to good objects. But, unhappily, they never seem to get beyond a certain point in their religion. They never come out boldly on Christ's side, never take up the cross, never confess Christ before men, never give up petty inconsistencies. They often tell you that they "mean, and intend, and hope, and purpose" some day to be more decided Christians. They know they are not quite what they ought to be at present, and they hope one day to be different. But the "convenient season" never seems to come. Meaning and intending they go on, and meaning and intending they go off the stage. Meaning and intending they live, and meaning and intending, too often, they die —kind, good-natured, respectable people; not enemies, but friends to Paul, but, like Agrippa, "almost Christians."

How is it, you may well ask, that men can go so far in religion, and yet go no further? How is it that they can see so much, and know so much, and yet not follow the light they have to the "perfect day"? How is it that intellect and reason and conscience can make such progress towards Christianity, and yet heart and will can lag behind?

The answers to these questions are soon given. The fear of man keeps back some. They have a cowardly dread of being laughed at, mocked, and despised, if they become decided Christians. They dare not risk the loss of man's good opinion. Like many of the Jewish rulers in our Lord's time, they "love the praise of men more than the praise of God" (John. 12:43). **The love of the world keeps back others. They know that decided religion entails separation from some of the fashionable amusements and modes of spending time, which are common in the world.** They cannot make up their minds to this separation. They shrink from their baptismal vow to "renounce the pomps and vanities of this world." Like Lot's wife, they would like to be delivered from the wrath of God; but, like her, they must "look back" (Gen. 19:26).

A certain subtle form of self-righteousness keeps back many. They take comfort in the secret thought that, at any rate, they are not so bad as Festus. They are not like some people they know—they do not despise religion. They go to church. They admire earnest men like Paul. Surely they will not be lost on account of a few inconsistencies!

The morbid dread of being party-spirited keeps back many, and especially young men. They are oppressed with the idea that they

cannot take a decided line in religion without committing themselves to some particular "school of thought." This is what they do not want to do. They forget that the case of Agrippa is not one of doctrine, but of conduct, and that decided action about duty is the surest way to obtain light about doctrinal truth. "If any man will do God's will, he shall know of the doctrine" (John. 7:17). Some secret sin, I fear, keeps back not a few. They know in their own hearts that they are clinging to something which is wrong in God's sight. There is an Herodias, or a Drusilla, or a Bernice, or an Achan's wedge of gold somewhere, in their private history, which will not bear the light of day. They cannot part with this darling. They cannot cut off the right hand, or pluck out the right eye, and so they cannot become disciples. Alas! for these excuses. Weighed in the balance, they are worthless and vain. Alas! for those who rest in them. Except they awake, and cast off their chains, they will make shipwreck forever.

Is Agrippa reading this paper today? Are there any like him whose eyes are on this page? Take a kindly warning from a minister of Christ, and try to realize that you are in a very dangerous position. Wishing, and feeling, and meaning, and intending, do not make up saving religion. They are but painted corks, which may enable you to float on the surface for a time, and keep your head above water, but they will not prevent you being carried down the stream, and being at last swept over a worse fall than that of Niagara And, after all, you are not happy. You know too much of religion to be happy in the world—you are too much mixed up with the world to get any comfort from your religion. In short, you are neither happy in the world nor out of the world. Awake to a sense of your danger and your folly. Resolve by God's help to become decided. Draw the sword, and cast away the scabbard. "If you have no sword, sell your garment and buy one" (Luke. 22:36). Burn your ships, and march straight forward. Do not merely look at the ark, and admire it; but enter in, before the door is shut and the flood begins. One thing, at any rate, may be laid down as an axiom in the elements of religion—An "almost" Christian is neither a safe nor a happy man.

III. Let us turn now to the last picture of the three. Let us look at the man whom Festus thought "beside himself," and by whom Agrippa was "almost persuaded to be a Christian." Let us look at **PAUL**. This is the man who boldly said," I would to God, that not only you, but all that hear me this day, were both almost and altogether such as I am, except these bonds." He wished his hearers no chains or imprisonment, such as he was suffering when he spoke. But he did wish them to be of one mind with him about the one thing needful; and to share his peace, his hope, his solid comfort, his expectations.

"Altogether such as I am." A weighty and memorable saying! It is the language of one who is thoroughly convinced and persuaded that he is in the right. He has cast overboard all doubts and hesitations. He holds the truth with the firm grasp of both hands, and not with finger and thumb. It is the language of the man who wrote in one place, "I know whom I have believed, and that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day."—And in another place," I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (2Ti. 1:12; Rom. 8:38-39).

(a) Paul was altogether convinced of the truth of the FACTS of Christianity. That the Lord Jesus Christ was actually "God manifest in the flesh"—that He had proved His divinity by doing miracles which could not be denied—that He had, finally, risen from the grave and ascended up into heaven, and was sitting at God's right hand as man's Savior—on all these points he had thoroughly made up his mind, and had not the slightest doubt of their credibility. On behalf of them he was willing to die.

(b) Paul was altogether convinced of the truth of the DOCTRINES of Christianity. That we are all guilty sinners, and in danger of eternal ruin, that the grand object of Christ coming into the world was to make atonement for our sins, and to purchase redemption by suffering in our stead on the cross—that all who repent and believe on Christ crucified are completely forgiven all sins—and that there is no other way to peace with God and heaven after death, but faith in Christ—all this he most steadfastly believed. To teach these doctrines was his one object from his conversion until his martyrdom.

(c) Paul was altogether convinced that he himself had been changed by the power of the Holy Spirit, and taught to live a new life—that a holy life, devoted and consecrated to Christ, was the wisest, happiest life a man could live, that the favor of God was a thousand times better than the favor of man—and that nothing was too much to do for Him who had loved him and given Himself for him. He ran his race ever "looking unto Jesus," and spending and being spent for Him (Heb. 12:2; 2Co. 5:15, 2Co. 12:15).

(d) Last, but not least, Paul was altogether convinced of the reality of a world to come. The praise or favor of man, the rewards or punishments of this present world, were all as dross to him. He had before his eyes continually an inheritance incorruptible, and a crown of glory that would never fade away (Phi. 3:8; 2Ti. 4:8). Of that crown he knew that nothing could deprive him. Festus might despise him, and think him "mad." The Roman emperor, to whom he was going, might order him to be beheaded or thrown to the lions. What matter? He was firmly persuaded that he had treasure laid up in heaven which neither Festus nor Caesar could touch, and which would be his to all eternity.

This is what Paul meant when he said "altogether such as I am." About the facts, doctrines, practice, and rewards to come of Christianity, he had a rooted, settled, firm conviction—a conviction which he longed to see all men sharing. He was confident—he wanted others to enjoy the same confidence. He had no doubt or fear about the future state of his soul. He would gladly have seen Festus, Agrippa, Bernice, and all around them, in the same happy condition.

Now, are there many in the present day like Paul? I do not of course mean, are there many inspired Apostles? But I do mean, is it common to meet Christians who are as thorough, as unhesitating, as full of assurance as he was? I fear there can only be one answer to this question. "Not many," whether rich or poor, high or low, "are called."—"Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leads unto life, and few there be that find it" (1Co. 1:26; Mat. 7:14). Look where you please, search where you like in town or in country, there are few "altogether" Christians. Festus and Agrippa are everywhere—they meet us at every turn. But there are few thorough, wholehearted followers of Paul. Yet one thing is very certain. These few are the "salt of the earth," and the "light of the world" (Mat. 5:13-14). These few are the glory of the Church, and serve to keep it alive. Without them, the Church would be little better than a decaying carcase, a white-washed sepulcher, a lighthouse without light, a steam-engine without fire, a golden candlestick without a candle, a joy to the devil, and an offence to God.

These are the kind of men who shake the world, and leave an indelible mark behind them. Martin Luther, and John Wesley, and William Wilberforce were hated and lightly esteemed while they lived; but the work they did for Christ will never be forgotten. They were "altogether" Christians.

These are the kind of men who enjoy true happiness in their religion. Like Paul and Silas, they can sing in prison, and, like Peter, they can sleep quietly on the very edge of the grave (Act. 12:6, Act. 16:25). Strong faith gives them an inward peace which makes them independent of earthly troubles, and compels even their enemies to wonder. Your lukewarm Laodicean Christians have little comfort in their religion. It is the "thorough" men who have great peace. The first Marian martyr, John Rogers, when he was going to be burned alive for Protestantism, is said to have walked to the stake in Smithfield as cheerfully as if he were going to his wedding. The outspoken, courageous words of old Latimer, before the faggots were lighted, in the day of his martyrdom, in Broad Street, Oxford, are not forgotten to this very day. "Courage! Brother Ridley," he cried to his fellow-sufferer; "we shall light a candle in England today, by God's grace, which shall never be put out." These men were "altogether" Christians.

He who would be safe and prepared to meet his God at a moment's notice, at evening, at cock-crowing, or in the morning—he who would enjoy felt peace in his religion, peace unaffected by sicknesses, bereavements, bankruptcies, revolutions, and the last trumpet's sound—he who would do good in his day and generation, and be a fountain of Christian influence to all around him, influence known and recognized long after he has been laid in his grave—let that man remember what I tell. him today, and never forget it. You must not be content to be an "almost" Christian, like Agrippa. You must strive, and labor, and agonize, and pray to be an "altogether" Christian, like Paul.

And now, let us leave these three pictures with self-inquiry and self-examination. The time is short. Our years are quickly passing away. The world is growing old. The great assize will soon begin. The Judge will soon appear. What are we? To whom are we like? Whose is this image and superscription upon us? Is it that of Festus, or of Agrippa, or of Paul?

Where are Festus and Agrippa now? We do not know. A veil is drawn over their subsequent history, and whether they died as they lived we cannot tell. But where is Paul, the "altogether" Christian? That question we can answer. He is "with Christ, which is far better" (Phi. 1:23). He is waiting for the resurrection of the just, in that paradise of rest where sin and Satan and sorrow can trouble him no more. He has fought the good fight. He has finished his course, he has kept the faith. A crown is laid up for him which he will receive in the great review day of the Lord's appearing (2Ti. 4:7-8).

And, let us thank God, though Paul is dead and gone, the Savior who made Paul what he was, and kept him to the end, still lives and never changes—always able to save, always willing to receive. Let the time past suffice us, if we have trifled with our souls hitherto. Let us turn over a new leaf. Let us arise and begin with Christ, if we never began before. Let us go on with Christ to the end, if we have begun with Him already. With the grace of God, nothing is impossible. Who would have thought that Saul the Pharisee, the persecutor of Christians, would ever become the "altogether Christian" himself, would become the great Apostle of the Gentiles, and would turn the world upside down? While there is life there is hope. The follower of Festus and Agrippa may yet be converted, and live for years, and lie down in the grave at last an "altogether" Christian like Paul.

Pharisees and Sadducees

by J. C. Ryle

"Be careful," Jesus said to them. "Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees!" Matthew 16:6

Every word spoken by the Lord Jesus is full of deep instruction for Christians. It is the voice of the Chief Shepherd. It is the Great Head of the Church speaking to all its members—the King of kings speaking to His subjects—the Master of the house speaking to His servants—the Captain of our salvation speaking to His soldiers. Above all, it is the voice of Him who said, "I did not speak of my own accord—but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it." (John 12:49) The heart of every believer in the Lord Jesus ought to burn within him—when he hears his Master's words, he ought to say, "Listen! It is the voice of My Beloved!" (Song of Solomon 2:8).

Every word spoken by the Lord Jesus, is of the greatest value. Precious as gold, are all His words of *doctrine* and *teaching*; precious are all His *parables* and *prophecies*; precious are all His words of *comfort* and of *consolation*; precious, the not least of which, are all His words of *caution* and of *warning*. We are not merely to hear Him when He says, "Come to me—all who are weary and heavy burdened;" we are to also hear Him when He says, "Be careful—and be on your guard."

I am going to direct attention to one of the most solemn and emphatic warnings which the Lord Jesus ever delivered: "Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees." On this text I wish to erect a beacon for all who desire to be saved, and to preserve some souls, if possible, from making their lives a shipwreck. The times call loudly for such beacons: the spiritual shipwrecks of the last twenty-five years have been deplorably numerous. The watchmen of the Church ought to speak out plainly now, or forever hold their peace.

I. First of all, I ask my readers to observe WHO are those to whom the warning of the text was addressed.

Our Lord Jesus Christ was not speaking to men who were worldly, ungodly, and unsanctified—but to His own disciples, companions, and friends. He addressed men who, with the exception of the apostate Judas Iscariot, were right-hearted in the sight of God. He spoke to the twelve Apostles, the first founders of the Church of Christ, and the first ministers of the Word of salvation. And yet even to them He addressed the solemn caution of our text: "Be careful and be on your guard!"

There is something very remarkable in this fact. We might have thought that these Apostles needed little warning of this kind. Had they not given up all for Christ's sake? They had. Had they not endured hardship for Christ's sake? They had. Had they not believed Jesus, followed Jesus, loved Jesus, when almost all the world was unbelieving? All these things are true; and yet to them the caution was addressed: "Be careful and be on your guard!" We might have imagined that at any rate the disciples had little to fear from the "yeast of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees." They were poor and unlearned men, most of them fishermen or tax collectors; they had no desire to follow the teachings of the Pharisees and the Sadducees; they were more likely to be prejudiced against them than to feel any drawing towards them. All this is perfectly true; yet even to them there comes the solemn warning: "Be careful and be on your

guard!"

There is useful counsel here for all who profess to love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. It tells us loudly that the most eminent servants of Christ are not beyond the need of warnings, and ought to be always on their guard. It shows us plainly that the holiest of believers ought to walk humbly with his God, and to watch and pray so that he won't fall into temptation, and be overtaken with sin. None is so *holy*, that he cannot fall—not ultimately, not hopelessly—but to his own discomfort, to the scandal of the Church, and to the triumph of the world. None is so *strong* that he cannot for a time be overcome. Chosen as believers are by God the Father, justified as they are by the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ, sanctified as they are by the Holy Spirit—believers are still only men—they are still in the body, and still in the world. They are ever near temptation. They are ever liable to misjudge, both in doctrine and in practice. Their *hearts*, though renewed, are very feeble; their *understanding*, though enlightened, is still very dim. They ought to live like those who dwell in an enemy's land, and every day to put on the armor of God. The devil is very busy: he never slumbers or sleeps. Let us remember the falls of Noah, and Abraham, and Lot, and Moses, and David, and Peter; and remembering them—be humble, and be careful so that we don't fall.

I may be allowed to say that none need warnings so much as the *ministers* of Christ's Gospel. Our office and our ordination are no security against errors and mistakes. It is true, that *the greatest heresies have crept into the Church of Christ by means of ordained men!* Ordination does not confers any immunity from error and false doctrine. Our very familiarity with the Gospel often creates in us a hardened state of mind. We are apt to read the Scriptures, and preach the Word, and conduct public worship, and carry on the service of God, in a dry, hard, formal, callous spirit. Our very familiarity with sacred things, unless we watch our hearts, is likely to lead us astray. "Nowhere," says an old writer, "is a man's soul in more danger—than in a minister's study." The history of the Church of Christ contains many dismal proofs that the most distinguished ministers may for a time fall away. Who has not heard of *Cranmer* recanting and going back from those opinions he had defended so stoutly; though, by God's mercy, raised again to witness a glorious confession at last? Who has not heard of *Jewell* signing documents that he most thoroughly disapproved, and of which signature he afterwards bitterly repented? Who does not know that many others might be named, who at one time or another, have been overtaken by faults, have fallen into errors, and been led astray? And who does not know the mournful fact that many of them never came back to the truth—but died in hardness of heart, and held their errors to the end!

These things ought to make us humble and cautious. They tell us to distrust our own hearts, and to pray to be kept from falling. In these days, when we are especially called upon to cleave firmly to the doctrines of the Protestant Reformation, let us be careful that our zeal for Protestantism does not puff us up, and make us proud. Let us never say in our self-conceit, "I shall never fall into the errors Roman Catholicism or any New Theology: those views will never suit me." Let us remember that many have *begun* well and run well for a season—and yet afterwards turned aside out of the right way. Let us be careful that we are *spiritual men*—as well as Protestants, and *real friends of Christ*—as well as enemies of antichrist. Let us pray that we may be kept from error, and never forget that *the twelve Apostles themselves* were the men to whom the Great Head of the Church addressed these words: "Be careful and be on your guard!"

II. I propose, in the second place, to explain—what were those DANGERS against which our Lord warned the Apostles. "Be careful," He says, "Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees." The danger of which He warns them is *false doctrine*. He says nothing about the sword of persecution, or the love of money, or the love of pleasure. All these things no doubt were perils and snares to which the souls of the Apostles were exposed; but against these things our Lord raises no warning voice here. His warning is confined to one single point: "The yeast of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees." We are not left to conjecture what our Lord meant by that word "yeast." The Holy Spirit, a few verses after the very text on which I am now dwelling, tells us plainly that by yeast was meant the "doctrine" of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees. Let us try to understand what we mean when we speak of the "doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees."

(a) The doctrine of the PHARISEES may be summed up in three words: they were *formalists, tradition-worshipers, and self-righteous*. They attached such weight to the traditions of men that they practically regarded them of more importance than the inspired writings of the Old Testament. They valued themselves on excessive strictness in their attention to all the ceremonial requirements of the Mosaic law. They thought much of being descended from Abraham, and said in their hearts, "We have Abraham for our father!" They imagined, because they had Abraham for their father—that they were not in danger of hell like other men, and that their descent from him was a kind of title to heaven. They attached great value to washings and ceremonial purifyings of the body, and believed that the very touching of the dead body of a fly or gnat would defile them. They made a great deal about the external parts of religion, and such things that could be seen by men. They made broad their phylacteries, and enlarged the fringes of their garments. They prided themselves on paying great honor to dead saints, and garnishing the graves of the righteous. They were very zealous to make converts. They prided themselves in having power, rank, and preeminence, and of being called by men, "Teacher, Teacher." These things, and many things like these, the Pharisees did. Every well-informed Christian can find these things in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark (See Matthew 15 and 23; Mark 7).

Remember, all this time, they did not formally deny any part of the Old Testament Scripture. But they brought in, over and above it, so much of *human invention*, that they virtually put Scripture aside, and buried it under their own traditions. This is the sort of religion, of which our Lord says to the Apostles, "Be careful and be on your guard."

(b) The doctrine of the SADDUCEES, on the other hand, may be summed up in three words: free-thinking, skepticism, and rationalism. Their creed was far less popular than that of the Pharisees, and, therefore, we find them mentioned less often in the New Testament Scriptures. So far as we can judge from the New Testament, they appear to have held the doctrine of degrees of inspiration; at all times they attached greater value to the Pentateuch [first five Books of the Old Testament] above all the other parts of the Old Testament, if indeed they did not altogether ignore the latter.

They believed that there was no resurrection, no angels, and no spirits, and tried to laugh men out of their belief in these things, by bringing forward difficult questions. We have an instance of their mode of argument, in the case which they propounded to our Lord of the woman who had had seven husbands, when they asked, "At the resurrection, whose wife will she be of the seven?" And in this way they probably hoped, by rendering religion absurd, and its chief doctrines ridiculous, to make men altogether give up the faith they had received from the Scriptures. Remember, all this time, we cannot say that the Sadducees were downright infidels—this they were not. We may not say they denied revelation altogether; this they did not do. They observed the law of Moses. Many of them were

found among the priests in the times described in the Acts of the Apostles. Caiaphas who condemned our Lord, was a Sadducee. But the practical effect of their teaching was to shake men's faith in any revelation, and to throw a cloud of doubt over men's minds, which was only one degree better than infidelity. And of all such kind of doctrine: free thinking, skepticism, rationalism, our Lord says, "Be careful and be on your guard!"

Now the question arises—Why did our Lord Jesus Christ deliver this warning? He knew, no doubt, that within forty years the schools of the Pharisees and the Sadducees would be completely overthrown. He who knew all things from the beginning, knew perfectly well that in forty years Jerusalem, with its magnificent temple, would be destroyed, and the Jews scattered over the face of the earth. Why then do we find Him giving this warning about "the yeast of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees"?

I believe that our Lord delivered this solemn warning for the perpetual benefit of that Church which He came to earth to establish. He spoke with a *prophetic* knowledge. He knew well the diseases to which human nature is always liable. He foresaw that the two great plagues of His Church on earth would always be the doctrine of the Pharisees and the doctrine of the Sadducees. He knew that these would like two large rocks, between which His truth would be perpetually crushed and bruised until He came the second time. He knew that there always would be Pharisees in spirit, and Sadducees in spirit, among professing Christians. He knew that their succession would never fail, and their generation never become extinct, and that though the *names* of Pharisees and Sadducees were no more, yet their *principles* would always exist. He knew that during the time that the Church existed, until His return, there would always be some who would *add* to the Word, and some who would *subtract* from it, some who would tone it down, by adding to it other things, and some who would bleed it to death, by subtracting from its principal truths. And this is the reason why we find Him delivering this solemn warning: "Be careful and be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees!"

And now comes the question, Did not our Lord Jesus Christ have good reason to give this warning? I appeal to all who know anything of Church history—was there indeed not a cause? I appeal to all who remember what took place soon after the apostles were dead. Do we not read that in the primitive Church of Christ, there rose up two distinct parties; one ever inclined to err, like the Arians, in holding less than the truth; the other ever inclined to err, like the relic worshipers and saint worshipers of the Roman Catholic Church, in holding more than the truth as it is in Jesus? Do we not see the same thing coming out in later times, in the form of Roman Catholicism? These are ancient things. In a short paper like this it is impossible for me to enter more fully into them. They are things well known to all who are familiar with records of past days.

There always have been these two great parties—the party representing the principles of the Pharisee, and the party representing the principles of the Sadducee. Therefore our Lord had good cause to say of these two great principles, "Be careful and be on your guard."

But, I desire to bring the subject even nearer at the present moment. I ask my readers to consider whether warnings like this are not especially needed in our own times. We have, undoubtedly, much to be thankful for in England. We have made great advances in arts and sciences in the last three centuries, and have much of the *form* and *show* of morality and religion. But, I ask anybody who can see beyond his own door, or his own living room, whether we do not live in the midst of *dangers from false doctrine?*

We have among us, on the one side, a group of men who, wittingly or unwittingly, are paving the way to the Church of Rome—a school that professes to draw its principles from primitive tradition, the writings of the Fathers, and the voice of the Church—a teaching that talks and writes so much about the Church, the ministry, and the Sacraments, that it makes them like Aaron's rod which swallows up everything else in Christianity, a teaching that attaches vast importance to the *outward form* and *ceremony* of religion—to gestures, postures, bowings, crosses, holy water, seats of honor for the clergy, altar cloths, incense, statues, banners, processions, floral decorations, and many other like things, about which not a word is to be found in the Holy Scriptures as having any place in Christian worship. I refer, of course, to the school of Churchmen called *Ritualists*. When we examine the proceedings of that school, there can be but one conclusion concerning them. I believe whatever is the meaning and intention of its teachers, however devoted, zealous, and self-denying, many of them are, those whom has fallen *the cloak of the Pharisees*.

We have, on the other hand, a school of men who, wittingly or unwittingly, appear to pave the way to Socinianism—a school which holds strange views about the absolute inspiration of Holy Scripture, and stranger views about the doctrine of sacrifice, and the Atonement of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, strange views about the eternity of punishment, and God's love to man, a school strong in negatives—but very weak in positives, skillful in raising doubts—but impotent in removing them, clever in unsettling and unscrewing men's faith—but powerless to offer any firm rest for man. And, whether the leaders of this school mean it or not—I believe that on them has fallen *the cloak of the Sadducees*.

These things sound harsh. It saves a vast deal of trouble—to shut our eyes, and say, "I see no danger," and because it is not seen, therefore not to believe it. It is easy to cover our ears and say, "I hear nothing," and because we hear nothing, therefore to feel no alarm. But we know well who they are that rejoice over the state of things we have to deplore in some quarters of our own Church. We know what the Roman Catholic thinks: we know what the Socinian thinks. The Roman Catholic rejoices over the rise of the Catholicism: the Socinian rejoices over the rise of men who teach such views as those set forth in modern days about the atonement and inspiration. They would not rejoice as they do if they did not see their work being done, and their cause being helped forward.

The danger, I believe, is far greater than we are apt to suppose. The *books* that are read in many quarters are most mischievous, and the tone of thought on religious subjects, among many classes, and especially among the higher ranks, is deeply unsatisfactory. The *plague* is abroad! If we love life, we ought to search our own hearts, and try our own faith, and make sure that we stand on the right foundation. Above all, we ought to take heed that we ourselves do not drink the poison of false doctrine, and go back from our first love.

I feel deeply the painfulness of speaking out on these subjects. I know well that speaking plain about false doctrine is very unpopular, and that the speaker must be content to find himself being thought of as very uncharitable, very troublesome, and very narrow-minded. Most people can never distinguish *differences* in religion. To the bulk of men a *clergyman* is a clergyman, and a *sermon* is a sermon, and as to any difference between one minister and another, or one doctrine and another, they are utterly unable to understand it. I cannot expect such people to approve of any warning against false doctrine. I must make up my mind to meet with their disapproval, and must bear it as I best can. But I will ask any honest-minded, unprejudiced Bible reader, to turn to the New Testament and see what he will find there. He will find many plain warnings against false doctrine:

"Watch out for false prophets!" (Matthew 7:15).

"See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy!" (Colossians 2:8).

"Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings!" (Hebrews 13:9).

"Do not believe every spirit—but test the spirits to see whether they are from God." (1 John 4:1).

He will find a large part of several inspired epistles taken up with elaborate explanations of true doctrine, and warnings against false teaching. I ask whether it is possible for a minister who takes the Bible for his rule of faith—to avoid giving warnings against doctrinal error?

Finally, I ask any one to mark what is going on in England at this very day. I ask whether it is not true that hundreds have left the *Established Church* and joined the *Church of Rome* within the last thirty years? I ask whether it is not true that hundreds remain within our boundaries, who in heart are little better than Romanists? I ask again whether it is not true that scores of young men, both at Oxford and Cambridge, are spoiled and ruined by the withering influence of skepticism, and have lost all positive principles in religion? Sneers at religious newspapers, loud declarations of dislike to "denominations," high-sounding, vague phrases about "deep thinking, broad views, new light, free handling of Scripture, and the barren weakness of certain schools of theology," make up the whole Christianity of many of the rising generation. And yet, in the face of these notorious facts, men cry out, "Hold your peace about false doctrine. Let false doctrine alone!" I cannot hold my peace. Faith in the Word of God, love to the souls of men, the vows I took when I was ordained, all alike constrain me to bear witness against the errors of the day. And I believe that the saying of our Lord is eminently a truth for the times: "Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees!"

III. The third thing to which I wish to call attention is—the peculiar NAME by which our Lord Jesus Christ speaks of the doctrines of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.

The words which our Lord used were always the wisest and the best that could be used. He might have said, "Be careful and be on your guard against the *doctrine*, or of the *teaching*, or of the *opinions* of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees." But He does not say so: He uses a word of a peculiar nature—He says, "Be careful and be on your guard against the '**yeast'** of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees." Now we all know what is the true meaning of the word "yeast." The yeast is added to the lump of dough in making a loaf of bread.

This yeast bears but a *small proportion* to the lump into which it is mixed; just so, our Lord would have us know, the first beginning of false doctrine is but small, compared to the body of Christianity. It works **quietly** and **silently**; just so, our Lord would have us know, false doctrine works secretly in the heart in which it is once planted. It insensibly changes the character of the whole mass with which it is mingled; just so, our Lord would have us know, the doctrines of the Pharisees and Sadducees turn everything upside down, when once admitted into a Church or into a man's heart. Let us mark these points: they throw light on many things that we see in the present day. It is of vast importance to receive the lessons of wisdom that this word "yeast" contains in itself.

False doctrine does not meet men face to face, and proclaim that it is false. It does not blow a trumpet before it, and endeavor openly to turn us away from the truth as it is in Jesus. It does not come before men in broad day, and summon them to surrender. It approaches us *secretly, quietly, insidiously, plausibly*, and in such a way as to disarm man's suspicion, and throw him off his guard. It is the *wolf in sheep's clothing*, and *Satan in the garb of an angel of light*, who have always proved the most dangerous foes of the Church of Christ.

I believe the most powerful champion of the Pharisees is not the man who bids you openly and honestly come out and join the Church of Rome: it is the man who says that he agrees on all points with you in "doctrine." He would not take anything away from those evangelical views that you hold; would not have you make any changes at all; all he asks you to do is to "add" a little more to your belief, in order to make your Christianity perfect. "Believe me," he says, "We do not want you to give up anything. We only want you to hold a few more clear views about the Church and the sacraments. We want you to add to your present opinions, a little more about the office of the ministry, and a little more about the authority of Bishops, and a little more about the Prayer-book, and a little more about the necessity of order and of discipline. We only want you to add "a little more" of these things to your system of religion, and you will be quite right.

But when men speak to you in this way, then is the time to remember what our Lord said, and to "Be careful and be on your guard!" This is the, yeast of the Pharisees, against which we are to stand upon our guard. Why do I say this? I say it because there is no security against the doctrine of the Pharisees—unless we resist its principles in their beginnings!

1. Beginning with a "little more about the Church"—You may one day put the Church in the place of Christ.

2. Beginning with a "little more about the ministry"—You may one day regard the minister as "the mediator between God and man."

3. Beginning with a "little more about the sacraments"—You may one day altogether give up the doctrine of justification by faith without the deeds of the law.

4. Beginning with a "little more reverence for the Prayer-book"—You may one day place it above the Holy Word of God itself.

5. Beginning with a "little more honor to Bishops"—You may at last refuse salvation to everyone who does not belong to an Episcopal Church.

I only tell an old story—I only mark out roads that have been trodden by hundreds of members of the Church of England in the last few years. They began by faultfinding at the Reformers, and have ended by swallowing the decrees of the Roman Catholic church. They began by crying about the way things were, and have ended by formally joining the Church of Rome. I believe that when we hear men asking us to "add a little more" to our good old plain Evangelical views, we should stand upon our guard. We should remember our Lord's caution: "Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees!"

I consider the most dangerous champion of the Sadducee school, is not the man who tells you openly that he wants you to lay aside any part of the truth, and to become a free-thinker and a skeptic. It is the man who begins with quietly insinuating doubts as to the position that we ought to take up about religion, doubts whether we ought to be so positive in saying "this is truth, and that falsehood," doubts whether we ought to think men wrong who differ from us on religious opinions, since they may after all be as much right as we are. It is the man who tells us we ought not to condemn anybody's views, lest we err on the side of the *lack of love*. It is the man who always begins talking in a vague way about God being a God of love, and hints that we ought to believe perhaps that all men, whatever doctrine they profess, will be saved. It is the man who is ever reminding us that we ought to take care how we think lightly of men of powerful minds, and great intellects (though they are deists and skeptics), who do not think as we do, and that, after all, "great minds are all more or less, taught of God!" It is the man who is ever harping on the difficulties of inspiration, and raising questions whether all men may not be found saved in the end, and whether all may not be right in the sight of God. It is the man who crowns this kind of talk by a few calm sneers against what he is pleased to call "old-fashioned views," and "narrow-minded theology," and "bigotry," and the "lack of liberality and love," in the present day. But when men begin to speak to us in this kind of way, then is the time to stand upon our guard. Then is the time to remember the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and "Be careful and be on your guard against the yeast!"

Once more, why do I say this? I say it because there is no security against Sadduceeism, any more than against Phariseeism, unless we *resist its principles in the bud!* Beginning with a little vague talk about "love," you may end in the doctrine of universal salvation, fill heaven with a mixed multitude of *wicked* as well as godly, and deny the existence of hell. Beginning with a few high-sounding phrases about intellect and the inner light in man, you may end with denying the work of the Holy Spirit, and maintaining that Homer and Shakespeare were as truly inspired as Paul, and thus practically casting aside the Bible. Beginning with some dreamy, misty idea about "all religions containing more or less truth," you may end with utterly denying the necessity of missions, and maintaining that the best plan is to leave everybody alone. Beginning with dislike to "Evangelical religion," as old-fashioned, narrow, and exclusive—you may end by rejecting every leading doctrine of Christianity—the atonement, the need of divine grace, and the divinity of Christ.

Again I repeat that I only tell an old story—I only give a sketch of a path which scores have trodden in the last few years. They were once satisfied with such divinity as that of Newton, Scott, Cecil, and Romaine; they are now fancying they have found a more excellent way in the principles which have been propounded by theologians of the *Broad* school! I believe there is no safety for a man's soul—unless he remembers the lesson involved in those solemn words, "Be on your guard against the yeast of the Sadducees!"

Let us be on our guard against the "insidiousness" of false doctrine. Like the fruit of which Eve and Adam ate, at first sight it looks pleasant and good, and a thing to be desired. "Poison" is not written upon it, and so people are not afraid. Like counterfeit coin, it is not stamped "bad." It passes for the real thing, because of the very likeness it bears to the truth. Let us be on our guard against the "very small beginnings" of false doctrine. Every heresy began at one time, with some little departure from the truth. There is only "a little seed of error" needed to create a great tree of heresy. It is the *little stones* which make up the mighty building. It was the *little pieces of lumber,* which made the great ark that carried Noah and his family over a deluged world. It is the *little leaven* which the whole lump. It is the *little flaw* in one link of the chain cable which wrecks the gallant ship, and drowns the crew. It is the omission or addition of one little item in the doctor's prescription, which spoils the whole medicine, and turns it into poison. We do not tolerate quietly a little dishonesty, or a little cheating, or a little lying. Just so, let us never allow a little false doctrine to ruin us, by thinking it is but a "little one," and can do no harm. The Galatians seemed to be doing nothing very dangerous when they "were observing special days and months and seasons and years;" yet Paul says, "I fear for you" (Galatians 4:10, 11).

Finally, let us be on our guard against supposing that "we at any rate are not in danger." "Our views are sound; our feet stand firm. Others may fall away—but we are safe!" Hundreds have thought the same, and have come to a dreadful end. In their self-confidence they tampered with *little temptations* and little forms of *false doctrine*; in their self-conceit they went near the *brink* of danger; and now they seem lost forever! They appear given over to a strong delusion, so as to believe a lie. Some of them are praying to the Virgin Mary, and bowing down to images. Others of them are casting overboard one doctrine after another, and are stripping themselves of every sort of religion, but a few scraps of Deism. Very striking is the vision in Pilgrim's Progress, which describes the *hill Error* as "very steep on the farthest side;" and "when Christian and Hopeful looked down they saw at the bottom, several men dashed all to pieces by a fall they had from the top." Never, never let us forget the caution to beware of "yeast;" and if we think we stand, let us "be careful that we don't fall!"

IV. I propose in the fourth and last place, to suggest some SAFEGUARDS and treatment against the dangers of the present day—the yeast of the Pharisees and the yeast of the Sadducees.

I feel that we all need more and more, the presence of the Holy Spirit in our hearts, to guide, to teach, and to keep us sound in the faith. We all need to watch more, and to pray to be held up, and preserved from falling away. But still, there are certain great truths, which, in a day like this, we are specially bound to keep in mind. There are times when some common epidemic invades a land, when medicines, at all times valuable, become of *special* value. There are places where a uncommon malaria prevails, in which remedies, in every place valuable, are more than ever valuable in consequence of it.

So I believe there are times and seasons in the Church of Christ when we are bound to tighten our hold upon certain great leading truths, to grasp them with more than ordinary firmness in our hands, to press them to our hearts, and not to let them go. Such doctrines I desire to set forth in order, as the great prescription against the yeast of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees. When Saul and Jonathan were slain by the *archers*, David ordered the children of Israel to be taught the use of the *bow*.

(a) For one thing, if we would be kept sound in the faith, we must take heed to our doctrine about the "total corruption of human nature." The *corruption of human nature* is no slight thing. It is no partial, skin-deep disease—but a radical and universal corruption of man's will, intellect, affections, and conscience. We are not merely *poor* and *pitiable* sinners in God's sight —we are *guilty* sinners; we are *blameworthy* sinners: we deserve justly God's wrath and God's condemnation. I believe there are very few errors and false doctrines of which the beginning may not be traced up to unsound views about the corruption of human nature. Wrong views of a *disease* will always bring with them wrong views of the *remedy*. Wrong views of the corruption of human nature will always carry with them wrong views of the grand treatment and cure of that corruption.

(b) For another thing, we must take heed to our doctrine about "the inspiration and authority of the Holy Scriptures." Let us boldly maintain, in the face of all the opposers, that the whole of the Bible is given by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that all is inspired completely, not one part more than another, and that there is an entire gulf between the Word of God and any other book in the world. We need not be afraid of difficulties in the way of the doctrine of *absolute inspiration*. There may be many things about it, which are far too high for us to comprehend. Scripture inspiration is a miracle, and all miracles are necessarily mysterious. But if we are not to believe anything until we can entirely explain it, there are very few things indeed that we shall believe.

We need not be afraid of all the assaults which *criticism* brings to bear upon the Bible. From the days of the apostles the Word of the Lord has been incessantly "tried," and has never failed to come forth as gold, uninjured, and spotless.

We need not be afraid of the discoveries of *science*. Astronomers may sweep the heavens with telescopes, and geologists may dig down into the heart of the earth—and never shake the authority of the Bible! "The *voice* of God, and the *work* of God's hands—never will be found to contradict one another." We need not be afraid of the researches of travelers. They will never discover anything which contradicts God's Bible. I believe that if a man were to go over all the earth and dig up a hundred buried Ninevehs, there would not be found a single inscription which would contradict a single fact in the Word of God.

Furthermore, we must boldly maintain that this *Word of God is the only rule of faith and of practice*—that whatever is not written in it— cannot be required of any man as needful of salvation; and that however plausibly new doctrines may be defended, if they are not in the Word of God—they cannot be worth our attention. It matters nothing *who* says a thing, whether he be bishop or minister; pastor or pope. It matters nothing that the thing is *well said*, eloquently, attractively, forcibly, and in such a way as to turn the laugh against you. We are not to believe it except it is proved to us by Holy Scripture.

Last—but not least, **we must use the Bible as if we believed it was given by inspiration.** We must use it with reverence, and read it with all the tenderness with which we would read the words of an absent father. We must not expect to find *no mysteries* in a book inspired by the Spirit of God. We must rather remember that in *nature* there are many things we cannot understand; and that as it is in the *book of nature*, so it will always be in the *book of Revelation*.

We should draw near to the Word of God in that spirit of piety recommended by Lord Bacon many years ago. "Remember," he says, speaking of the book of nature, "that man is not the master of that book—but the interpreter of that book." And as we deal with the book of nature, so we must deal with the Book of God. We must draw near to it, not to *teach*—but to *learn*; not like the *master* of it—but like a *humble scholar*, seeking to understand it.

(c) For another thing, we must take heed to our doctrine respecting "the atonement and priestly office of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." We must boldly maintain that the death of our Lord on the cross was no common death. It was not the death of a *martyr*. It was not the death of one who only died to give us a mighty *example* of self-sacrifice and self-denial. The death of Christ was an offering up to God of Christ's own body and blood, to make an atoning sacrifice for man's sin and transgression. This sacrifice was typified in every offering of the Mosaic law—a sacrifice of the mightiest influence on all mankind. Without the shedding of *that* blood there could not be, there never was to be—any remission of sin.

Furthermore, we must boldly maintain that this crucified Savior evermore sits at the right hand of God, to make intercession for all who come to God by Him; that He there represents and pleads for those who put their trust in Him; and that He has delegated His office of Priest and Mediator to no *man*, or *set of men* on the face of the earth. We need none besides. We need no Virgin Mary, no angels, no saint, no priest, no person ordained or unordained—to stand between us and God—but the one Mediator, Christ Jesus.

Furthermore, we must boldly maintain that peace of conscience is not to be bought by confession to a priest, and by receiving a man's absolution from sin. It is to be had only by going to the great High Priest, Christ Jesus; by confession before Him, not before man. Absolution can come from Him who alone can say, "Your sins are forgiven! Go in peace."

Last—but not least, we must boldly maintain that peace with God, once obtained by faith in Christ, is to be kept up, not by mere *outward ceremonial acts* of worship, not by receiving the sacrament of the Lord's Supper every day—but by the daily habit of looking to the Lord Jesus Christ by faith, eating by faith His body, and drinking by faith His blood; that eating and drinking of which our Lord says that he who eats and drinks shall find His "body to be food indeed—and His blood to be drink indeed."

Godly John Owen declared, long ago, that if there was any one point more than another that Satan wished to overthrow, it was the Priestly office of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. "Satan knew well," he said, that it was the "principal foundation of faith and consolation of the Church." Right views about Christ's office, are of essential importance in the present day, if men would not fall into error.

(d) One more remedy I must mention. We must take heed to our doctrine about "the work of God the Holy Spirit." Let us settle it in our minds, that His work is no uncertain invisible operation on the heart—and that where He is, He is not hidden, not unfelt, not unobserved. We believe that the *rain*, when it falls, can be felt. We believe that where there is *life* in a man—it can be seen and observed by his breath. So is it with the influence of the Holy Spirit. No man has any right to lay claim to it—except its *fruits*, its experimental *effects*, can be *seen* in his life. Where He is, there will ever be a new creation, and a new man. Where He is, there will ever be new knowledge, new faith, new holiness, new fruits in the life, in the family, in the world, in the church. And where these new things are not seen, we may well say, with confidence, that there is no work of the Holy Spirit in that person. These are times in which we all need to be on our guard about the doctrine of the work of the Spirit. One said, long ago, that the time would perhaps come when men might have to be martyrs for the work of the Holy Spirit. That time seems not far distant. At any rate, if there is one truth in religion which seems to have more *contempt* showered upon it than another, it is the work of the Spirit.

I desire to impress the immense importance of these four points upon all who read this paper:

(a) clear views of the sinfulness of human nature.

(b) clear views of the inspiration of Scripture.

(c) clear views of the Atonement and Priestly office of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

(d) clear views of the work of the Holy Spirit.

I believe that false doctrines about the church, the ministry, and the Sacraments, about the love of God, the death of Christ, and the eternity of punishment—will find no foothold in the heart which is sound on these four points. I believe that they are *four great safeguards* against the yeast of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.

I will now conclude this paper with a few remarks by way of **PRACTICAL APPLICATION**. My desire is to make the whole subject useful, to those into whose hands these pages may fall, and to supply an answer to the questions which may possibly arise in some hearts. What are we to *do?* What *advice* have you got to offer for these times?

(1) In the first place, I will ask every reader of this paper to find out whether he has "saving personal religion for his own soul." This is the principal thing, after all. It will profit no man to belong to a sound visible church—if he does not himself belong to Christ. It will avail a man nothing to be intellectually sound in the faith, and to approve sound doctrine—if he is not himself *sound at heart*. Is this the case with you? Can you say that your heart is right in the sight of God? Is it renewed by the Holy Spirit? Does Christ dwell in it by faith? O, rest not, rest not—until you can give a satisfactory answer to these questions! The man who dies unconverted, however sound his views—is as truly lost forever as the worst Pharisee or Sadducee that ever lived!

(2) In the next place, let me entreat every reader of this paper who desires to be sound in the faith—to study the Bible diligently. That blessed book is given to be a light to our feet, and a lantern to our path. No man who reads it reverently, prayerfully, humbly, and regularly—shall ever be allowed to miss the way to heaven! By it every sermon, and every religious book, and every ministry ought to be weighed and proved.

Would you know what is truth? Do you feel confused and puzzled by the war of words which you hear on every side about religion? Do you want to know what you ought to believe, and what you ought to be and do, in order to be saved? Take down your *Bible*—and cease listening to *man!* Read your Bible with earnest prayer for the teaching of the Holy Spirit; read it with honest determination to obey its lessons. Do so steadily and perseveringly, and you shall see light—you shall be kept from the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees, and be guided to eternal life. The way to *do* a thing is to *do* it. Act upon this advice without delay!

(3) In the next place, let me advise every reader of this paper who has reason to hope that he is sound in faith and heart, to "take heed to the PROPORTION of truths." I mean by that, to impress the importance of giving each truth of Christianity the same place and position in our hearts—which is given to it in God's Word. The *first* things must not be put second—and the *second* things must not be put first in our religion. The *church* must not be put above *Christ*. *Ministers* must not be exalted above the place assigned to them by Christ. Means of grace must not be regarded as an *end* instead of a *means*. Attention to this point is of great consequence: the mistakes which arise from neglecting it are neither few nor small. Here lies the immense importance of *studying the whole Word of God*, omitting nothing, and avoiding partiality in reading one part more than another. Here again lies the value of having *a clear system of Christianity* in our minds.

(4) In the next place, let me entreat every true hearted servant of Christ "not to be deceived by the superficial disguise" under which false doctrines often approach our souls in the present day. Beware of supposing that a teacher of religion is to be trusted, because although he holds some unsound views—that he yet "teaches a great deal of truth." Such a teacher is precisely the man to do you harm! Poison is always most dangerous when it is given in small doses and mixed with wholesome food. Beware of being taken in by the apparent *earnestness* of many of the teachers and upholders of false doctrine. Remember that *zeal* and *sincerity* and *fervor*—are no proof whatever, that a man is working for Christ, and ought to be believed.

Peter no doubt was in earnest—when he told our Lord to spare Himself, and not go to the cross; yet our Lord said to him, "Get behind Me, Satan." *Saul* no doubt was in earnest—when he went to and fro persecuting Christians; yet he did it ignorantly, and his zeal was not according to knowledge. The founders of the *Spanish Inquisition* no doubt were in earnest—in the burning alive of God's people. They thought they were doing God's service—yet they were actually persecuting Christ's members and walking in the steps of Cain!

It is an dreadful fact, that "Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light" (2 Corinthians 11:14). Of all the delusions prevalent in these latter days, there is none greater than the common notion that "if a man is in serious about his religion—he must be a good man!" Beware of being carried away by this delusion; beware of being led astray by "serious-minded men!" Seriousness is in itself an excellent thing; but it must be seriousness in behalf of Christ and His whole truth—or else it is worth nothing at all. The things that are highly esteemed among men—are often abominable in the sight of God.

(5) In the next place, let me counsel every true servant of Christ—to "examine his own heart" frequently and carefully as to his state before God. This is a practice which is useful at all times—it is especially desirable at the present day. When the great plague of London was at its height, people marked the least symptoms that appeared on their bodies in a way that they never marked them before. A spot here, or a spot there, which in time of health men thought nothing of, received close attention when the plague was decimating families, and striking down one after another! So it ought to be with ourselves, in the times in which we live. We ought to watch our hearts with double watchfulness. We ought to give more time to meditation, self-examination, and reflection. It is a hurrying, bustling age—if we would be kept from falling, we must make time for being frequently alone with God.

(6) Last of all, let me urge all true believers "to *contend* for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints." We have no cause to be ashamed of that faith. I am firmly persuaded that there is no system so life-giving, so calculated to awaken the sleeping, lead on the inquiring, and build up the saints—as that system which is called the *Evangelical system of Christianity*. Wherever it is faithfully preached, and efficiently carried out, and consistently adorned by the lives of its professors—it is the power of God. It may be spoken against and mocked by some; but so it was in the days of the Apostles. It may be weakly set forth and defended by many of its advocates; but, after all, its *fruits* and its *results* are its highest praise.

No other system of religion can point to such fruits. Nowhere are so many souls converted to God—as in those congregations where the Gospel of Jesus Christ is preached in all its fullness, without any mixture of the Pharisee or Sadducee doctrine. We are not called upon to be nothing but controversialists; but we never ought to be ashamed to testify to the truth as it is in Jesus, and to stand up

boldly for Evangelical religion. We have the truth, and we need not be afraid to say so. The judgment-day will prove who is right—and to that day we may boldly appeal!

The Rights and Duties of Laymen

By J. C. Ryle

"Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus—To all the **saints** in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons" Philippians 1:1

This opening verse of Paul's Epistle to the Philippians is a very remarkable text of Scripture. I suspect it receives far less attention from Bible readers than it deserves. Like the gold of California, men have walked over it for centuries, and have not observed what was under their feet. In fact, if some Anglican divines had stood at the Apostle's elbow when he wrote this verse, I believe they would have hinted that he had made a mistake.

Now what do I mean by all this? What is the remarkable point to which I refer? The point on which I place my finger is Paul's mention of "the saints" before the "bishops and deacons." He places the *laity* before the *clergy* when he addresses the Philippian Church. He puts the body of the baptized in the front rank, and the ministers in the rear.

There is no room for dispute about the various readings of manuscripts in this case. It was unmistakably given by inspiration of God, and written for our learning. As such, I see in it the germ of a great truth, which demands special notice in the present day. In short, it opens up the grave subject of the *rights and duties of the lay members of a Christian Church*.

I approach the whole subject with a deep sense of its delicacy and difficulty. I disclaim the slightest sympathy with those revolutionary counselors who want us to throw overboard Creeds, and turn the Church into a Pantheon, in the vain hope of buying off invaders. I desire nothing but scriptural and reasonable reforms, and I know no reform so likely to strengthen the Church as that of placing her laity in their rightful position. One of the best modes of promoting effective Church defense in this day—is to promote wise Church reform.

What, then, was the position of the lay members of Churches in the days of the Apostles? Let us imagine ourselves paying a visit to the baptized communities at Rome, or Corinth, or Ephesus, or Thessalonica, or Jerusalem, and let us see what we would have found, and what Scripture teaches about them. In this, as in many other matters, we have a right to ask, *"What light can we get from the New Testament?"*

This is an inquiry which deserves special attention, and I am much mistaken if the result does not astonish some people, and make them open their eyes.

I say then, without hesitation, that you will not find a single text in the New Testament in which the ordained ministers alone are ever called "the Church," or ever act for the Church without the laity uniting and co-operating in their action.

Are the deacons appointed? The apostles recommend their proposal, but "the whole multitude" choose (Act. 6:5). Is a council held to consider whether the heathen converts should be circumcised, and keep the ceremonial law? The decision arrived at is said to come from "the apostles, and elders, and brethren," with "the whole Church" (Act. 15:22-23). Are inspired Epistles written by Paul to particular Churches? In eight cases they are addressed to "the Church, the saints, the faithful brethren"—and in only one case (the Epistle to the Philippians) is there any mention of overseers and deacons" in the opening address. Does Paul send instructions to the Church about the Lord's Supper, and about speaking with tongues? He sends them to "them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus" not to the *ministers*. Is discipline exercised against an unsound member? I find Paul giving directions to the saints at Corinth, without mentioning the ministry, "Put away from among yourselves that wicked person" (1Co. 5:13). Is a man "overtaken in a fault" to be restored to communion? Paul tells those who are "spiritual" among the Galatians to do it, and does not refer it to their ministers. (Gal. 6:1). Is an Epistle written to the Christian Hebrews? Not a word is said about "rulers" until you come to the last chapter. Does James write a General Epistle? He addresses the "twelve tribes," and only names "teachers" in the third chapter. Does Peter write a General Epistle? He writes to the whole body of the elect, and says nothing to the "elders" until he arrives at the last chapter, and even then he is careful to remind them that they are not "lords over God's heritage." As for the Second Epistle of Peter, and the Epistles of John and Jude, they never touch the subject of the ministry at all.

Now let no one mistake me. That there was to be a distinct order of men to minister to the Church is, to my eyes, most plainly taught in the New Testament. Paul, we are told, "ordained *elders* in every Church" (Act. 14:23). See 1Co. 12:28; Eph. 4:11; 1st and 2nd Epistles to Timothy; and Titus. But that "the Church" in any city or country meant especially the *laity*, and the ministers were only regarded as the "servants of the Church" (2Co. 4:5), seems to me as clear as the sun at noon-day.

As for a Church in which the clergy acted alone, settled everything, decided everything, judged everything, and managed everything, and the laity had no voice at all, I cannot find the spirit of the shadow of such a thing in the Acts or Epistles of the New Testament. On the contrary, while Paul tells the Thessalonians to "esteem their ministers very highly," it is to the *laity*, and not the clergy, that he addresses the words, "Warn those who are unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak" (1Th. 5:13-14).

Before I go any further in this paper, I think it right to say a few words in self-defense, to prevent possible misunderstanding. If anyone supposes that I wish to exalt and exaggerate the position of the laity at the expense of the clergy, and that I think lightly of the ministerial office—he is totally mistaken. In a deep sense of the value of the Christian ministry, as an ordinance of Christ, and a necessity in a fallen world, I give place to no man. But I dare not overstep scriptural limits in this matter. I cannot refrain from saying that a sacerdotal ministry, a mediatorial ministry, an infallible ministry, a ministry of men who by virtue of episcopal ordination have any monopoly of knowledge, or any special ability to settle disputed questions of faith or ritual such a ministry, in my judgment, is an innovation of man, and utterly without warrant of Holy Scripture. It is a ministry which has been borrowed from the typical system of the Jewish Church, and has no place in the present dispensation. The Christian minister is a teacher, an ambassador, a messenger,

a watchman, a witness, a shepherd, a steward—and is expressly authorized by the Epistles to Timothy and Titus, where his duties are clearly laid down. But there is a conspicuous absence of New Testament proof that he is a sacrificing priest!

In saying this I do not stand alone. The learned Bishop of Durham, in his exhaustive work on Philippians, uses the following language:

"The kingdom of Christ has no sacerdotal system. It interposes no sacrificial tribe or class between God and man by whose entreaties alone God is reconciled and man forgiven. Each individual member holds personal communion with the Divine Head. To Him immediately he is responsible, and from Him directly he obtains pardon and draws strength" (p. 174, ed. 3).

Again, he says—"The sacerdotal title is never once conferred on the ministers of the Church. The only priests under the gospel, designated as such under the New Testament, are the saints, the members of the Christian brotherhood" (p. 132, ed. 3). This is sound speech, which cannot be condemned. First published in 1868, it has stood the test of eighteen years' criticism, and *its principles remain unanswered and unanswerable*. To these principles I firmly adhere, and I press them on the consideration of all English Churchmen in the present day.

I leave the subject of the lay members of the apostolic Churches at this point, and commend it to the attention of all who read this paper. It is my conviction that the prominent position occupied by the laity in these primitive communities was one grand secret of their undeniable strength, growth, prosperity, and success. There were no sleeping Christians in those days. Every member of the ecclesiastical body worked. Everyone felt bound to do something. All the baptized members, whether men or women, if we may judge from the 16th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, took a direct active interest in the welfare and progress of the whole ecclesiastical body. They were not tame, ignorant sheep, led here and there at the beck of an autocratic shepherd. The best regiment in an army is that in which officers and privates take an equal interest in the efficiency of the whole corps. It is the regiment in which the officers trust the privates and the privates trust the officers. It is the regiment in which every private is intelligent, and behaves as if the success of the campaign depended on him. It is the regiment in which every private knows his duty, and is honorably proud of his profession, and would fight to the last for the colors, even if every officer fell. Such a regiment was a primitive Church in apostolic days. It had its officers—its overseers and deacons. It had orders, due subordination, and discipline. But the mainspring and backbone of its strength lay in the zeal, intelligence, and activity of its laity!

I hold it to be a canon and axiom of the Christian faith, that the nearer a Church can get to the pattern of Scripture the better she is, and the farther she gets away from it the worse.

A mischievous habit of leaving all religion to the parson of the parish has overspread the country, and the bulk of laymen seem to think that they have nothing to do with the Church but to receive the benefit of her means of grace, while they contribute nothing in the way of personal active exertion to promote her efficiency. The vast majority of church-goers appear to suppose that when they have gone to church on Sunday, they have done their duty, and are not under the slightest obligation to warn, to teach, to rebuke, to edify others, to promote works of charity, to assist evangelization, or to raise a finger in checking sin, and advancing Christ's cause in the world. Their only idea is to be perpetually receiving, but never doing anything at all. They have taken their seats in the right train, and are only to sit quiet, while the clerical engine draws them to heaven, perhaps half asleep.

If an Ephesian or Philippian or Thessalonian layman were to rise from the dead and see how little work present laymen do for the English Church, he would not believe his eyes. The difference between the primitive type of a layman and the English type is the difference between light and darkness, black and white. The one used to be awake and alive, and always about his Master's business. The other is too often asleep practically, and torpid, and idle, and content to leave the religion of the parish in the hands of the parson. When this is the case—and who will deny it? there must be something painfully wrong in our system.

With every desire to make the best of our Church, I cannot avoid the conclusion that in the matter of the laity, its system is at present defective and sub-scriptural. I cannot reconcile the position of the English layman in 1888 with that of his brother in any apostolic Church eighteen centuries ago. I cannot make the two things square. To my eyes, it seems that in the regular working of the Church of England, almost everything is left in the hands of the clergy, and hardly anything is assigned to the laity! The clergy settle everything! The Clergy manage everything! The clergy arrange everything! The laity are practically allowed neither voice, nor place, nor opinion, nor power, and must accept whatever the clergy decide for them. In all this there is no intentional slight. Not the smallest reflection is implied on the trustworthiness and ability of the laity. But from one cause or another they are left out in the cold, passive recipients and not active members, in a huge ecclesiastical corporation,—sleeping members, and not working agents in an unwieldy and ill-managed concern. In short, our laymen have been left as unwanted soldiers—they have fallen out of the ranks, retired to the rear, and sunk out of sight.

Now, what is the true cause of this anomalous state of things? It is one which may easily be detected. The position of the English laity is neither more nor less than a rag and remnant of Popery. It is part of those "damnable heresies" which Rome has bequeathed to our Church, and which has never been completely purged away. Our Reformers themselves were not perfect men, and among other blots which they left on the face of our Church, I must sorrowfully admit that neglect of the interests of the laity was not the least one. To make the clergy mediators between Christ and man—to exalt them far above the laity, and put all ecclesiastical power into their hands—to clothe them with sacerdotal authority, and regard them as infallible guides in all Church matters—this has always been an essential element of the Romish system. This element our Reformers, no doubt, ought to have corrected by giving more power to the laity, as John Knox did in Scotland. They omitted to do so. The unhappy fruit of the omission has been that gradually the chief authority in our Church matters has fallen almost entirely into the hands of the clergy, and the laity have been left without their due rights and powers. The effect at the present day is that the English laity are far below the position they ought to occupy, and the English clergy are far above theirs. Both parties, in short, are in the wrong place.

What are the **consequences** of this unsatisfactory state of things? They are precisely what might be expected—evil and only evil. *Departure from the mind of God, even in the least things, is always sure to bear bitter fruit*. Lifted above their due position, the English clergy have always been inclined to sacerdotalism, priestism, self-conceit, and an overweening estimate of their own privileges and powers. Fallen below their due position, the English laity, with occasional brilliant exceptions, have taken little interest in church matters, and have been too ready to leave everything to be managed by the clergy. In the meantime, for three centuries the Church of

England has suffered great and almost irremediable damage.

Seldom considered, seldom consulted, seldom trusted with power, seldom invested with authority—the English layman, as a rule, is ignorant, indifferent, or apathetic about Church questions. How few laymen know anything about their own Church work! How few care one jot! How few understand the meaning of the great doctrinal controversies by which their Church is almost rent asunder! How few exhibit as much personal interest or concern about them, as a Roman spectator would have exhibited about the fight of a couple of gladiators in the arena of the Coliseum! How few could tell you anything more than this, "that there is some squabble among the parsons; and they don't pretend to understand it!" This is a melancholy picture; but I fear it is a sadly correct one. And yet who can wonder? The English laity have never yet had their rightful position in the management of the Church of England.

You may lay it down as an infallible rule, that the best way to make a man feel an *interest in a business*—is to make him a "part of the concern." The rule applies to ecclesiastical corporations as well as to commercial ones. The Church of England has lost sight of this principle altogether. The laity have never been properly employed, or trusted, or considered, or called forward, or consulted, or placed in position, or armed with authority, as they ought to have been. The consequence is that, as a body, they neither know, nor care, nor feel, nor understand, nor think, nor read, nor exercise their minds, nor trouble their heads much, about church affairs. The system under which this state of things has grown up is a gigantic mistake. The sooner it is cut up by the roots and turned upside down the better. If we want to remove one grand cause of our Church's present weakness, we must completely alter the position of the laity. On this point, if on no other, there is great need of Church reform.

Evangelical Religion

J. C. Ryle

"Approve things that are excellent"- Philippians 1:10

I. Evangelical PRINCIPLES

1. The Absolute Supremacy of Holy Scripture

Show us anything, plainly written, in that Book, we will receive it, believe it, and submit to it. Show us anything contrary to that Book, and however sophisticated, plausible, beautiful and apparently desirable, we will not have it at any price.

2. The Doctrine of Human Sinfulness and Corruption

Man is radically diseased. I believe that ignorance of the extent of the Fall, and of the whole doctrine of original sin, is one grand reason why many can neither understand, appreciate, nor receive Evangelical Religion.

3. The Work and Office of our Lord Jesus Christ

The eternal Son of God is our Representative and Substitute. We maintain that people ought to be continually warned not to make a Christ of the Church.

We hold that nothing whatever is needed between the soul of man the sinner, and Christ the Savior, but simple child-like faith.

4. The Inward Work of the Holy Spirit

We maintain that the things which need most to be pressed on men's attention are those mighty works of the Holy Spirit--inward repentance, faith, hope, hatred of sin, and love to God's law. We say that to tell men to take comfort in their baptism or church membership when these all-important graces are unknown, is not merely a mistake, but positive cruelty.

5. The Outward and Visible Work of the Holy Spirit in the Life of Man

We maintain that to tell a man he is "born of God" or regenerated, while living in carelessness or sin, is a dangerous delusion.

It is the position we assign to these five points which is one of the grand characteristics of Evangelical theology. We say boldly that they are first, foremost, chief and principal things in Christianity.

II. Evangelical PROTESTATIONS

1. We protest against the modern practice of first personifying the Church, then deifying it, and finally idolizing it.

2. We refuse to admit that Christian Ministers are in any sense sacrificing priests.

We find that sacerdotalism or priestcraft has frequently been the curse of Christianity, and the ruin of true religion.

3. We refuse to admit that Christ's Sacraments convey grace ex opere operato. We protest against the idea that in baptism the use of water, in the Name of the Trinity, is invariably and necessarily accompanied by regeneration. We protest against the theory that the Lord's Supper is a sacrifice. Above all, we protest against the notion of any local presence of Christ's body and blood in the Lord's Supper, under the forms of bread and wine, as "idolatry to be abhorred of all faithful Christians".

4. We refuse to join the cry, "No Bishop, no Church". We refuse to believe that bishops are infallible, or that their words are to be believed when they are not in harmony with the Scriptures.

5. We maintain that there can be no real unity without oneness in the faith. We protest against the idea of unity based on a common Episcopacy, and not on a common belief of Christ's Gospel. We abhor the very idea of re-union with Rome, unless Rome first purges herself from her many false doctrines and superstitions.

III. Evangelical PERSUASIONS

1. Substitute anything for Christ, and the Gospel is totally spoiled!

2. Add anything to Christ, and the Gospel ceases to be a pure Gospel!

3. Interpose anything between man and Christ, and man will neglect Christ for the thing interposed!

4. Spoil the proportions of Christ's Gospel, and you spoil its efficacy!

5. Evangelical religion must be the Gospel, the whole Gospel and nothing but the Gospel.

IV. Evangelical PRACTICES

"Watch, stand fast in the faith, be courageous like men, be strong" (1 Corinthians 16:13)

1. Take heed that personal religion is thoroughly and entirely Evangelical.

The world is possessed with a devil of false charity about religion.

2. Do not compromise Evangelical principles. Watch narrowly new church decorations, new church music, and a semi-histrionic mode of going through church worship.

3. Observe that they do no good at all, who attempt to mix up Evangelical preaching and a Ritual ceremonial. The world is never won by trimming and compromising; by facing both ways, and trying to please all.

4. Look the danger manfully in the face and fight with the same Word that Cranmer, Latimer, and Ridley fought with.

5. The path of duty is clear, plain, and unmistakable. Union and organization of all Protestant and Evangelical Churchmen; untiring exposure of the Popish dealings of our antagonists by the pulpit, the platform, and the press.

I say, "No surrender! No desertion! No compromise! No disgraceful peace!"

ATHENS

by J. C. Ryle

"Now, while Paul waited for them at **Athens**, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry. Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him." (Acts 17:16-17)

Perhaps the reader of this paper lives in a town or city, and sees more of bricks and mortar than of green fields. Perhaps you have some relative or friend living in a town, about whom you naturally feel a deep interest. In either case, the verses of Scripture which head this page demand your best attention. Give me that attention for a few short minutes while I try to show you the lessons which the passage contains.

You see face to face, in the verses before you, no common city and no common man.

The city is the famous city **Athens**—Athens, renowned to this very day for its statesmen, philosophers, historians, poets, painters, and architects—Athens, the eye of ancient Greece, as ancient Greece was the eye of the heathen world.

The man is the great Apostle of the Gentiles, **Paul**—Paul, the most laborious and successful minister and missionary the world has ever seen—Paul, who by pen and tongue has left a deeper mark on mankind than any born of woman, except his Divine Master.

Athens and Paul, the great servant of Christ, and the great stronghold of old heathenism—are brought before us face to face. The result is told us—the interview is carefully described. The subject, I venture to think, is eminently suited to the times in which we live, and to the circumstances of many a dweller in London, Liverpool, Manchester, and other great English towns in the present day.

Without further preface, I ask you to observe three things in this passage—
I. What Paul SAW at Athens.
II. What Paul FELT at Athens.
III. What Paul DID at Athens.

I. What did Paul SEE at Athens?

The answer of the text is clear and unmistakable. **He saw a "city wholly given to idolatry."** Idols met his eyes in every street. The

temples of idol gods and goddesses occupied every prominent position. The magnificent statue of Minerva, at least forty feet high, according to Pliny, towered above the Acropolis, and caught the eye from every point. A vast system of idol-worship overspread the whole place, and thrust itself everywhere on his notice. The ancient writer Pausanias expressly says, that "the Athenians surpassed all states in the attention which they paid to the worship of the gods." In short, the city, as the marginal reading says, was "full of idols."

And yet this city, I would have you remember, was probably the most favorable specimen of a heathen city which Paul could have seen. In proportion to its size, it very likely contained the most learned, civilized, philosophical, highly educated, artistic, intellectual population on the face of the globe. But what was it in a religious point of view? The city of wise men like Socrates and Plato—the city of Solon, and Pericles, and Demosthenes-the city of Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, and Thucydides—the city of mind, and intellect, and art, and taste—this city was "wholly given to idolatry."

If the true God was unknown at Athens—what must He have been in the darker places of the earth? If the eye of Greece was so spiritually dim, what must have been the condition of such places as Babylon, Ephesus, Tyre, Alexandria, Corinth, and even of Rome? If men were so far gone from the light in a green tree, what must they have been in the dry tree?

What shall we say to these things? What are the conclusions to which we are irresistibly drawn by them?

1. Ought we not to learn, for one thing, the absolute need of a Divine revelation, and of teaching from heaven? Leave man without a Bible, and he will have a religion of some kind, for human nature, corrupt as it is, must have a God. But it will be a religion without light, or peace, or hope.

"The world by wisdom knew not God" (1Co. 1:21). Old Athens is a standing lesson which we shall do well to observe. It is vain to suppose that nature, unaided by revelation, will ever lead fallen man to nature's God. Without a Bible, the Athenian bowed down to stocks and stones, and worshiped the work of his own hands. Place a heathen philosopher, a Stoic or an Epicurean—by the side of an open grave, and ask him about a world to come, and he could have told you nothing certain, satisfactory, or peace-giving.

2. Ought we not to learn, for another thing, that the highest intellectual training is no security against utter darkness in religion? We cannot doubt that mind and reason were highly educated at Athens, if anywhere in the heathen world. The students of Greek philosophy were not unlearned and ignorant men. They were well versed in logic, ethics, rhetoric, history, and poetry. But all this mental discipline did not prevent their city being a "city wholly given to idolatry."

And are we to be told in the nineteenth century, that reading, writing, arithmetic, mathematics, history, languages, and physical science, without a knowledge of the Scriptures, are sufficient to constitute education? God forbid! We have not so learned Christ. It may please some men to idolize intellectual power, and to speak highly of the debt which the world owes to the Greek mind. One thing, at any rate, is abundantly clear. Without the knowledge which the Holy Spirit revealed to the Hebrew nation, old Greece would have left the world buried in dark idolatry. A follower of Socrates or Plato might have talked well and eloquently on many subjects, but he could have never answered the jailor's question, "What must I do to be saved?" (Act. 16:30). He could never have said in his last hour, "O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory?"

3. Ought we not to learn, for another thing, that the highest excellence in the arts is no preservative against the grossest superstition? The perfection of Athenian architecture and sculpture is a great and undeniable fact. The eyes of Paul at Athens beheld many a "thing of beauty" which is still "a joy forever" to artistic minds. And yet the men who conceived and executed the splendid buildings of Athens were utterly ignorant of the one true God. The world nowadays is well-near drunk with self conceit about our so-called progress in arts and sciences. Men talk and write of machinery and manufactures, as if nothing were impossible. But let it never be forgotten that the highest art or mechanical skill is consistent with a state of spiritual death in religion. Athens, the city of Phidias, was a "city wholly given to idolatry." An Athenian sculptor might have designed a matchless tomb, but he could not have wiped a single tear from a mourner's eye!

These things ought not to be forgotten. They ought to be carefully pondered. They suit the times in which we live. We have fallen on a skeptical and an unbelieving age. We meet on every side with doubts and questionings about the truth and value of revelation. "Is not reason alone sufficient?" "Is the Bible really needful to make men wise unto salvation?" "Has not man a light within, a verifying power, able to guide him to truth and God?" Such are the inquiries which fall as thick as hail around us. Such are the speculations which disquiet many unstable minds.

One plain answer is an appeal to facts. The remains of heathen Egypt, Greece, and Rome shall speak for us. They are preserved by God's providence to this very day as monuments of what intellect and reason can do without revelation. The minds which designed the temples of the Parthenon or Coliseum, were not the minds of fools. The builders who executed their designs did better and more lasting work than any contractor can do in modern times. The men who conceived the sculptured friezes, which we know as the Elgin Marbles, were trained and intellectual to the highest degree. And yet in religion these men were darkness itself (Eph. 5:8). The sight which Paul saw at Athens is an unanswerable proof that man knows nothing which can do his soul good without a Divine revelation.

II. I ask you to notice, in the second place, what Paul FELT at Athens. He saw a "city wholly given to idolatry." How did the sight affect him? What did he feel?

It is instructive to **observe how the same sight affects different people.** Place two men on the same spot; let them stand side by side; let the same objects be presented to their eyes. The emotions called forth in the one man will often be wholly different from those called forth in the other. The thoughts which will be wakened up and brought to birth will often be as far as the poles asunder.

A mere **artist** visiting Athens for the first time would doubtless have been absorbed in the beauty of its buildings. A **statesman** or orator would have called up the memory of Pericles or Demosthenes. A **literary** man would have thought of Thucydides and Sophocles and Plato. A **merchant** would have gazed on the Piraeus, its harbor, and the sea. But an **Apostle of Christ** had far higher thoughts. One thing, above all others, swallowed up his attention, and made all else look small. That one thing was the spiritual condition of the Athenian people, the state of their souls. The great Apostle of the Gentiles was eminently a man of one thing. Like his Divine Master, he was always thinking of his "Father's business" (Luke 2:49). He stood at Athens, and thought of nothing so much as Athenian souls. Like Moses, Phinehas, and Elijah, "his spirit was stirred within him when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry."

Of all sights on earth, I know none so impressive, none so calculated to arouse thought in a reflecting mind—as the sight of **a great city**. The daily interaction of man with man, which a city naturally produces, seems to sharpen intellect, and stimulate mental activity to an extent which dwellers in rural parishes, or other solitary places, cannot realize. Rightly or wrongly, the inhabitant of a city thinks twice as much, and twice as quickly, as the inhabitant of a rural village.

It is in the city—"where Satan's seat is" (Rev. 2:13). It is in the city—where evil of every kind is most rapidly conceived, sown, ripened, and brought to maturity. It is in the city—where the young man, leaving home, and launching into life, becomes soonest hardened, and conscience-seared by daily familiarity with the sight of sin. It is in the city—where sensuality, intemperance, and worldly amusements of the vilest kind flourish most rankly, and find a congenial atmosphere. It is in the city—where ungodliness and irreligion meet with the greatest encouragement, and the unhappy Sabbath-breaker, or neglecter of all means of grace, can fortify himself behind the example of others, and enjoy the miserable comfort of feeling that "he does not stand alone!" It is the city—which is the chosen home of every form of superstition, ceremonialism, enthusiasm, and fanaticism in religion. It is the city—which is the hotbed of every kind of false philosophy—of Stoicism, Epicureanism, Agnosticism, Secularism, Skepticism, Positivism, Infidelity, and Atheism. It is the city—where that greatest of modern inventions, the printing-press, that mighty power for good and evil, is ever working with unsleeping activity, and pouring forth new matter for thought. It is the city—where the daily newspapers are continually supplying food for minds, and molding and guiding public opinion. It is the city—which is the center of all national business. The banks, the law-courts, the Stock Exchange, the Parliament or Assembly, are all bound up with the city. It is the city—which, by magnetic influence, draws together the rank and fashion of the land, and gives the tone to the tastes and ways of society. It is the city—which practically controls the destiny of a nation.

Scattered millions, in rural districts, without habitual interaction or contact, are powerless before the thousands who dwell side by side and exchange thought every day. It is the towns which govern a land. I pity the man who could stand on the top of Saint Paul's Cathedral, and look down on London without some emotion, and not reflect that he sees the heart whose pulsations are felt over the whole civilized globe. And shall I wonder for a moment that the sight of Athens "stirred the spirit" of such a man as the great Apostle of the Gentiles? I cannot wonder at all. It was just the sight which was likely to move the heart of the converted man of Tarsus, the man who wrote the Epistle to the Romans, and had seen Jesus Christ face to face.

He was stirred with holy **compassion**. It troubled his heart to see so many myriads perishing for lack of knowledge, without God, without Christ, having no hope, traveling in the broad road which leads to destruction!

He was stirred with holy **sorrow**. It troubled his heart to see so much talent misapplied. Here were hands capable of excellent works, and minds capable of noble conceptions. And yet the God who gave life and breath and power was not glorified.

He was stirred with holy **indignation** against sin and the devil. He saw the god of this world blinding the eyes of multitudes of his fellow-men, and leading them captive at his will. He saw the natural corruption of man infecting the population of a vast city like one common disease, and an utter absence of any spiritual medicine, antidote, or remedy.

He was stirred with holy **zeal** for His Master's glory. He saw the "strong man armed" keeping a house which was not lawfully his, and shutting out the rightful possessor. He saw his Divine Master unknown and unrecognized by His own creatures, and idols receiving the homage due to the King of kings.

Reader, these feelings which stirred the Apostle are a leading characteristic of a man born of the Spirit. Do you know anything of them? Where there is true grace, there will always be tender concern for the souls of others. Where there is true sonship to God, there will always be zeal for the Father's glory. It is written of the ungodly, that they not only commit things worthy of death, but "have pleasure in those who do them" (Rom. 1:32). It may be said with equal truth of the godly, that they not only mourn over sin in their own hearts, but mourn over sin in others.

Hear what is written of Lot in Sodom—"He vexed his soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds" (2Pe. 2:8). Hear what is written of David—"Rivers of water run down mine eyes, because they keep not Your law" (Psalm 119:136). Hear what is written of the godly in Ezekiel's time—"They sigh and cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst of the land" (Eze. 9:4). Hear what is written of our Lord and Savior Himself—"He beheld the city, and wept over it" (Luke 19:41). Surely it may be laid down as one of the first principles of Scriptural religion, that he who can behold sin without sorrowful feelings has not the mind of the Spirit. This is one of those things in which the children of God are manifest, and are distinguished from the children of the devil.

I call the special attention of my readers to this point. The times demand that we look it fully in the face. **The feelings with which we regard sin, heathenism, and false religion are a subject of vast importance in the present day.**

I ask you, first, to look outside our own country, and consider the state of the heathen world. At least six hundred million immortal beings are at this moment sunk in ignorance, superstition, and idolatry. They live and die without God, without Christ, and without hope. In sickness and sorrow they have no comfort. In old age and death they have no life beyond the grave. Of the true way of peace through a Redeemer, of God's love in Christ, of free grace, of complete absolution from guilt, of a resurrection to life eternal, they have no knowledge. For long weary centuries they have been waiting for the tardy movements of the Church of Christ, while Christians have been asleep, or wasting their energies on useless controversies, and squabbling and wrangling about forms and ceremonies. Is not this a sight which ought to "stir the spirit?"

I ask you, next, to turn back to our own land, and consider the state of our great cities. There are districts in our great metropolis, in Liverpool, in Manchester, in Birmingham, in the Black Country, where Christianity seems practically unknown. Examine the religious condition of East London, or of Southwark, or Lambeth. Walk through the north end of Liverpool on Saturday evening, or Sunday, or on a holiday, and see how Sabbath-breaking, intemperance, and general ungodliness appear to rule and reign uncontrolled. "When the strong man armed keeps his palace, his goods are in peace" (Luke 11:21). And then remember that this state of things exists in a professedly Christian country, in a land where there is an Established Church, and within a few hours of Oxford and Cambridge! Once more I say, **ought not these things to "stir" our hearts?**

It is a sorrowful fact, that there is around us in the present day a generation of men who regard heathenism, infidelity, and false

religion with apathy, coolness, and indifference. They care nothing for Christian missions either at home or abroad. They see no necessity for them. They take no interest in the Evangelistic work of any Church or society. They treat all alike with undisguised contempt. They despise Exeter Hall. They never give subscriptions. They never attend meetings. They never read a missionary report. They seem to think that every man shall be saved by his own law or sect, if he is only sincere; and that one religion is as good as another, if those who profess it are only in earnest. They are fond of decrying and running down all spiritual machinery or missionary operations. They are constantly asserting that modern missions at home or abroad do nothing, and that those who support them are little better than weak enthusiasts. Judging by their language, they appear to think that the world receives no benefit from missions and aggressive Christian movements, and that it would be a better way to leave the world alone. What shall we say to these men? They meet us on every side. They are to be heard in every society. To sit by, and sneer, and criticize, and do nothing—this is apparently their delight and vocation. What shall we say to them?

Let us tell them plainly, if they will only hear us, that they are utterly opposed to the Apostle Paul. Let us show them that mighty model of a Christian missionary walking the streets of Athens, and "stirred" in spirit at the sight of a "city wholly given to idolatry." Let us ask them why they do not feel as he felt, about the idolatry of China and Hindustan, of Africa and the South Seas, or about the semi-heathen districts of London, Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham, and the Black Country. Let us ask them whether 1800 years have made any difference in the nature of God, the necessities of fallen man, the sinfulness of idol-worship, and the duty of Christians. We shall ask in vain for a reasonable answer—we shall get none. Sneers at our weakness are no argument against our principles. Jests at our infirmities and failures are no proof that our aims are wrong.

Yes—they may have the wit and wisdom of this world upon their side; but the eternal principles of the New Testament are written clearly, plainly, and unmistakably. So long as the Bible is the Bible, charity to souls is one of the first of Christian graces, and it is a solemn duty to feel for the souls of the heathen, and of all unconverted people. He who knows nothing of this feeling has yet to become a learner in Christ's school. He who despises this feeling is not a successor of Paul, but a follower of him who said, "Am I my brother's keeper?"—even of Cain.

III. I ask my readers to observe, in the last place, what Paul DID at Athens. What he **saw** you have heard; what he **felt** you have been told; but how did he **act**?

He did something. He was not the man to stand still, and "confer with flesh and blood" in the face of a city full of idols. He might have reasoned with himself that he stood alone—that he was a Jew by birth, that he was a stranger in a strange land—that he had to oppose the rooted prejudices and old associations of learned men, that to attack the old religion of a whole city was to beard a lion in his den—that the doctrines of the gospel were little likely to be effective on minds steeped in Greek philosophy. But none of these thoughts seem to have crossed the mind of Paul. He saw souls perishing; he felt that life was short, and time passing away; he had confidence in the power of his Master's message to meet every man's soul; he had received mercy himself, and knew not how to hold his peace. He acted at once; and what his hand found to do, he did with his might. Oh that we had more men of action in these days!

And he did what he did with holy wisdom as well as holy boldness. He commenced aggressive measures alone, and waited not for companions and helpers. But he commenced them with consummate skill, and in a manner most likely to obtain a footing for the gospel. First, we are told, he disputed "with the Jews" in the synagogue, and the "devout persons" or proselytes who attended the Jewish worship. Afterwards he went on to "dispute," or hold discussions, "in the market daily with those who met with him." He advanced step by step like an experienced general. Here, as elsewhere, Paul is a model to us—he **combined fiery zeal and boldness—with judicious tact and sanctified common sense.** Oh that we had more men of wisdom in these days!

But what did the Apostle teach? What was the grand subject which he argued, and reasoned out, and discussed, both with Jew and Greek, in synagogue and street? That he exposed the folly of idolatry to the ignorant multitudes—that he showed the true nature of God to the worshipers of images made with hands—that he asserted the nearness of God to us all, and the certainty of a solemn reckoning with God at the judgment day, to Epicureans and Stoics—these are facts which we have recorded fully in his address on Mars' Hill.

But is there nothing more than this to be learned about the Apostle's dealings with the idolatrous city? Is there nothing more distinctive and peculiar to Christianity which Paul brought forward at Athens? There is indeed more. There is a sentence in the 18th verse of the chapter we are looking at, which ought to be written in letters of gold—a sentence which ought to silence forever the impudent assertion, which some have dared to make, that the great Apostle of the Gentiles was sometimes content to be a mere teacher of deism or natural theology! We are told in the 18th verse that one thing which arrested the attention of the Athenians was the fact, that Paul **"preached Jesus and the resurrection."**

Jesus and the resurrection! What a mine of matter that sentence contained! What a complete summary of the Christian faith might be drawn from those words! That they are only meant to be a summary, I have no doubt. I pity those who would cramp and pare down their meaning, and interpret them as nothing more than Christ's prophetical office and example. I think it incredible that the very Apostle who a few days after went to Corinth, "determined to know nothing but Christ crucified," or the doctrine of the cross, would keep back the cross from Athenian ears. I believe that "Jesus and the resurrection" is a sentence which stands for the whole gospel. The Founder's name, and one of the foundation facts of the gospel, stand before us for the whole of Christianity.

What, then, does this sentence mean? What are we to understand Paul preached?

(a) Paul at Athens preached the **person** of the Lord Jesus—His divinity, His incarnation, His mission into the world to save sinners, His life, and death, and ascension up to heaven, His character, His teaching, His amazing love to the souls of men.

(b) Paul at Athens preached the **work** of the Lord Jesus—His sacrifice upon the cross, His vicarious satisfaction for sin, His substitution as the just for the unjust, the full redemption He has procured for all, and specially effected for all who believe, the complete victory He has obtained for lost man over sin, death, and hell.

(c) Paul at Athens preached the **offices** of the Lord Jesus—as the one Mediator between God and all mankind, as the great Physician for all sin-sick souls, as the Rest-giver and Peace-maker for all heavy-laden hearts, as the Friend of the friendless, the High Priest and Advocate of all who commit their souls into His hands, the Ransom-payer of captives, the Light and Guide of all wandering from

God.

(d) Paul at Athens preached the **message** which the Lord Jesus had commanded His servants to proclaim to all the world—His readiness and willingness to receive at once the chief of sinners; His ability to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by Him; the full, present, and immediate forgiveness which He offers to all who believe; the complete cleansing in His blood from all manner of sin; faith, or simple trust of heart, the one thing required of all who feel their sins and desire to be saved; entire justification without works, or doing, or deeds of law for all who believe.

(e) Last, but not least, Paul preached at Athens the **resurrection** of the Lord Jesus. He preached it as the miraculous fact on which Jesus Himself staked the whole credibility of His mission, and as a fact proved by such abounding evidence that no caviler at miracles has ever yet honestly dared to meets—He preached it as a fact, which was the very top-stone of the whole work of redemption, proving that what Christ undertook He fully accomplished, that the ransom was accepted, the atonement completed, and the prison doors thrown open forever. He preached it as a fact, proving beyond doubt the possibility and certainty of our own resurrection in the flesh, and settling forever the great question, "Can God raise the dead?"

These things and many like them, I cannot doubt, Paul preached at Athens. I cannot for one moment suppose that he taught one thing at one place and one at another. The Holy Spirit supplies the substance of his preaching in that rich sentence, "Jesus and the resurrection." The same Holy Spirit has told us fully how he handled these subjects at Antioch in Pisidia, at Philippi, at Corinth, and Ephesus. The Acts and the Epistles speak out on this point with no uncertain sound. I believe that "Jesus and the resurrection" means —Jesus and the redemption He effected by His death and rising from the grave, His atoning blood, His cross, His substitution, His mediation, His triumphant entrance into heaven, and the consequent full and complete salvation of all sinners who believe in Him. This is the doctrine Paul preached. This is the work Paul did when he was at Athens.

Now, have we nothing to learn from these doings of the great Apostle of the Gentiles? There are **lessons of deep importance** to which I venture briefly to invite the attention of all who read this paper. I say briefly. I only throw them out—as seeds for private thought.

(a) Learn, for one thing, a doctrinal lesson from Paul's doings at Athens. **The grand subject of our teaching, in every place, ought to be Jesus Christ.** However learned or however unlearned, however high-born or however humble our audience, Christ crucified—Christ—Christ—Christ—crucified, rising, interceding, redeeming, pardoning, receiving, saving—Christ must be the grand theme of our teaching. We shall never improve this gospel. We shall never find any other subject which will do so much good. We must sow as Paul sowed, if we would reap as Paul reaped.

(b) Learn, for another thing, a practical lesson from Paul's doings at Athens. **We must never be afraid to stand alone and be solitary witnesses for Christ**, if need be, alone in a vast ungodly parish, in our own land—alone in East London, in Liverpool, in Manchester—alone in Delhi, or Benares, or Pekin—it matters not. We need not hold our peace, if God's truth be on our side. One Paul at Athens, one Athanasius against the world, one Wycliffe against a host of Romish prelates, one Luther at Worms, these, these, are lighthouses before our eyes. God sees not as man sees. We must not stand still to count heads and number the people. **One man, with Christ in his heart and the Bible in his hands, is stronger than a myriad of idolaters!**

(c) Learn for another thing, the importance, let me rather say the necessity, of asserting boldly the supernatural element as an essential part of the Christian religion. I need not tell many who read these pages that unbelievers and skeptics abound in these days, who make a mockery at the miracles of the Bible, and are incessantly trying to throw them overboard as useless lumber, or to prove by ingenious explanations that they are fables and no miracles at all. Let us never be afraid to resist such teaching steadily, and to take our stand by the side of Paul. Like him, let us point to the resurrection of Christ, and confidently challenge all fair and reasonable men to refute the evidence by which it is supported. The enemies of supernatural religion have never refuted that evidence, and they never will. If Christ was not raised from the dead, the conduct and teaching of the Apostles after He left the world is an unsolved problem and a total mystery, which no man in his senses can account for. But if, as we believe, the resurrection of Christ is an undeniable fact which cannot be disproved, the whole fabric of skeptical arguments against supernatural religion is undermined, and must fall to the ground. The stupendous miracle of the resurrection of Christ once admitted, it is sheer nonsense to tell us that any other smaller miracle in the Bible is incredible or impossible.

(d) Learn, for one thing more, a lesson of encouragement to faith from Paul's doings at Athens. If we preach the gospel, we may preach with perfect confidence that it will do good. That solitary Jew of Tarsus who stood up alone on Mars' Hill appeared at the time to do little or nothing. He passed on his way, and seemed to have been a failure. The Stoics and Epicureans probably laughed and sneered as if they had won the dispute. But that solitary Jew was lighting a candle that has never since been put out. The Word that he proclaimed in Athens grew and multiplied, and became a great tree. That little leaven ultimately leavened the whole of Greece. The gospel that Paul preached triumphed over idolatry. The empty Parthenon stands, to this day, a proof that Athenian theology is dead and gone. Yes; if we sow good seed, we may sow it in tears, but we shall yet "come again with joy, bringing our sheaves with us" (Psalm 126:6).

I draw towards a CONCLUSION. I pass from the consideration of what Paul **saw**, and **felt**, and **did** at Athens, to points of practical importance. I ask every reader of this paper what ought we to see, to feel, and to do?

(1) What ought we to SEE? It is an age of sightseeing and excitement. "The eye is not satisfied with seeing" (Ecc. 1:8). The world is mad after running to and fro, and the increase of knowledge. The wealth, the arts, the inventions of man are continually gathering myriads into great Exhibitions. Thousands and tens of thousands are annually rushing about and gazing at the work of men's hands.

But ought not the Christian to look at the map of the world? Ought not the man who believes the Bible to gaze with solemn thoughts on the vast spaces in that map which are yet spiritually black, dead, and without the gospel? Ought not our eyes to look at the fact that half the population of the earth is yet ignorant of God and Christ, and yet sitting still in sin and idolatry, and that myriads of our own fellow-countrymen in our great cities are practically little better than heathen, because Christians do so little for souls?

The eyes of God see these things, and our eyes ought to see them too.

(2) What anything we to FEEL? Our hearts, if they are right in the sight of God, ought to be affected by the sight of false religion and heathenism. Many indeed are the feelings which the aspect of the world ought to call up in our hearts.

Thankfulness we ought to feel for our own countless privileges. Little indeed do the bulk of English people know the amount of their own daily unpaid debt to Christianity. Well would it be for some if they could be compelled to dwell for a few weeks every year in a heathen land.

Shame and humiliation we ought to feel when we reflect how little the Church of England has done for the spread of Christianity hitherto. God has indeed done great things for us since the days when Cranmer, Ridley, and Latimer went to the stake—has preserved us through many trials, has enriched us with many blessings. But how little return we have made Him! How few of our 15,000 parishes do anything worthy of the cause of missions at home or abroad! How little zeal some congregations show for the salvation of souls! These things ought not so to be!

We ought to feel compassion when we think of the wretched state of unconverted souls, and the misery of all men and women who live and die without Christ. No poverty like this poverty! No disease like this disease! No slavery like this slavery! No death like this, death in idolatry, false religion, and sin! Well may we ask ourselves, Where is the mind of Christ, if we do not feel for the lost? I lay it down boldly, as a great principle, that the Christianity which does not make a man feel for the state of unconverted people is not the Christianity which came down from heaven 1800 years ago, and is embalmed in the New Testament. It is a mere empty name. It is not the Christianity of Paul.

(3) Finally, what ought we to DO? This, after all, is the point to which I want to bring your mind. **Seeing** and **feeling** are good. But **doing** is the life of religion. Passive impressions which do not lead to action have a tendency to harden the conscience, and do us positive harm. What ought we to do? We ought to do much more than we have ever done yet. We might all probably do more. The honor of the gospel, the state of the missionary field abroad, the condition of our overgrown cities at home, all call upon us to do more.

Need we stand still, and be ashamed of the weapons of our warfare? Is the gospel, the old Evangelical creed, unequal to the wants of our day? I assert boldly that we have no cause to be ashamed of the gospel at all. It is not worn out. It is not effete. It is not behind the times. We need nothing new, nothing added to the gospel, nothing taken away. We need nothing but "the old paths," the old truths fully, boldly, affectionately proclaimed. Only preach the gospel fully, the same gospel which Paul preached, and it is still "the power of God unto salvation to every one who believes," and nothing else called religion has any real power at all. (Rom. 1:16.)

Need we stand still and be ashamed of the results of preaching the gospel? Shall we hang down our heads, and complain that "the faith once delivered to the saints" has lost its power, and does no good? We have no cause to be ashamed at all. I am bold to say that no religious teaching on earth can point to any results worth mentioning except that which is called doctrinal, dogmatic theology. What deliverance on earth have all the modern schools—which scorn dogmatic teaching—what deliverance have they wrought? What overgrown and semi-heathen parishes in the metropolis, in our great seaports, our manufacturing towns, our colliery districts, have they evangelized and civilized? What New Zealand, what Red River, what Sierra-Leone, what Tinnevelly can the high-sounding systems of this latter day point to as a fruit of their system?

No! if the question, "What is truth?" is to be solved by reference to results and fruits, the religion of the New Testament, the religion whose principles are summarized, condensed, and embalmed in our Articles, Creeds, and Prayer Book, has no cause to be ashamed.

What can we do now but humble ourselves for the past, and endeavor, by God's help, to do more for time to come? Let us open our eyes more, and see. Let us open our hearts more, and feel. Let us stir up ourselves to do more work ruby self-denying gifts, by zealous co-operation, by bold advocacy, by fervent prayer. Let us do something worthy of our cause. The cause for which Jesus left heaven and came down to earth, deserves the best that we can do.

And now, let me close this paper by returning to the thought with which it began. Perhaps your lot is cast in a city or town. The population of our rural districts is annually decreasing. The dwellers in towns are rapidly outnumbering the dwellers in country parishes. If you are a dweller in a town, accept the parting words of advice which I am about to offer. Give me, your best attention while I speak to you about your soul.

(1) Remember, for one thing, that **you are placed in a position of peculiar spiritual DANGER**. From the days of Babel downwards, wherever Adam's children have been assembled in large numbers, they have always drawn one another to the utmost extremities of sin and wickedness. The great towns have always been Satan's seat. It is the town where the young man sees abounding examples of ungodliness; and, if he is determined to live in sin, will always find plenty of companions. It is the town where the theater and the casino, the dancing room and the drinking bar, are continually crowded. It is the town where the love of money, or the love of amusement, or the love of sensual indulgence, lead captive myriads of slaves. It is the town where a man will always find hundreds to encourage him in breaking the Sabbath, despising the means of grace, neglecting the Bible, leaving off the habit of prayer. Reader, consider these things. If you live in a town, take care. Know your danger. Feel your weakness and sinfulness. Flee to Christ, and commit your soul to His keeping. Ask Him to hold you up, and you will be safe. Stand on your guard. Resist the devil Watch and pray.

(2) Remember, on the other hand, if you live in a town, **you will probably have some special HELPS which you cannot always find in the country**. There are few English towns in which you will not find a few faithful servants of Christ, who will gladly assist you and aid you in your journey towards heaven. Few indeed are the English towns in which you will not find some minister who preaches the gospel, and some pilgrims in the narrow way who are ready to welcome any addition to their number.

Reader, be of good courage, and never give way to the despairing thought that it is impossible to serve Christ in a town. Think rather that with God nothing is impossible. Think of the long list of witnesses who have carried the cross, and been faithful unto death in the midst of the greatest temptations. Think of Daniel and the three children in Babylon. Think of the saints in Nero's household at Rome. Think of the multitudes of believers at Corinth and Ephesus and Antioch in the days of the Apostles. It is not place but grace that makes the Christian. The holiest and most useful servants of God who have ever lived were not hermits in the wilderness but dwellers in towns.

Remember these things, and be of good cheer. Your lot may be cast in a city like Athens, "wholly given to idolatry." You may have to stand alone in the bank, the counting-house, the place of business, or the shop.

But you are not really alone, if Christ is with you. Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. Be bold, thorough, decided, and patient. The day will come when you will find that even hi a great city a man may be a happy, useful Christian, respected while he lives, and honored when he dies.

George Whitefield

by J. C. Ryle

Who were the men that revived religion in England a hundred years ago? What were their names, that we may do them honor? Where were they born? How were they educated? What are the leading facts in their lives? What was their special department of labor? To these questions I wish to supply some answers in the present and future chapters.

I pity the man who takes no interest in such inquiries. The instruments that God employs to do His work in the world deserve a close inspection. The man who did not care to look at the rams horns that blew down Jericho, the hammer and nail that slew Sisera, the lamps and trumpets of Gideon, the sling and stone of David, might fairly be set down as a cold and heartless person. I trust that all who read this volume will like to know something about the English evangelists of the eighteenth century.

The first and foremost whom I will name is the well-known George Whitefield. Though not the first in order, if we look at the date of his birth, I place him **first in the order of merit**, without any hesitation. Of all the spiritual heroes of a hundred years ago, none saw so soon as Whitefield what the times demanded, and none were so forward in the great work of spiritual aggression. I would think I committed an act of injustice if I placed any name before his.

Whitefield was born at Gloucester in the year 1714. The city where Hooper preached and prayed, and where the zealous Miles Smith protested, was the place where **the greatest preacher of the gospel England has ever seen** was born.

Whitefield's early life, according to his own account, was anything but religious; though, like many boys, he had occasional prickings of conscience and spasmodic fits of devout feeling. **But habits and general tastes are the only true test of young people's characters.** He confesses that he was "addicted to lying, filthy talking, and foolish jesting", and that he was a 'Sabbath-breaker, a theater-goer, a card-player, and a romance reader". All this, he says, went on until he was fifteen years old.

At the age of fifteen Whitefield appears to have left school, and to have given up Latin and Greek for a season. In all probability, his mother's straitened circumstances made it absolutely necessary for him to do something to assist her in business and to get his own living. He began, therefore, to help her in the daily work of the Bell Inn. "At length", he says, "I put on my blue apron, washed cups, cleaned rooms, and, in one word, became a professed common drawer for near a year and a half."

This state of things, however, did not last long. His mother's business at the Bell did not flourish, and she finally retired from it altogether. An old school-fellow revived in his mind the idea of going to Oxford, and he went back to the Grammar School and renewed his studies. Friends were raised up who made interest for him at Pembroke College, Oxford, where the Grammar School of Gloucester held two exhibitions. And at length, after several providential circumstances had smoothed the way, he entered Oxford as a servitor at Pembroke at the age of eighteen.

Whitefield's residence at Oxford was the great turning-point in his life. For two or three years before he went to the University his journal tells us that he had not been without religious convictions. But from the time of his entering Pembroke College these convictions fast ripened into decided Christianity. He diligently attended all means of grace within his reach. He spent his leisure time in visiting the city prison, reading to the prisoners, and trying to do good. He became acquainted with the famous John Wesley and his brother Charles, and a little band of like-minded young men, including the well-known author of Theron and Aspasio, James Hervey. These were the devoted party to whom the name "Methodists" was first applied, on account of their strict "method" of living. At one time he seems to have greedily devoured such books as Thomas Kempis, and Castanuza's Spiritual Combat, and to have been in danger of becoming a semi-papist, an ascetic, or a mystic, and of placing the whole of religion in self-denial. He says in his Journal, I always chose the worst sort of food. I fasted twice a week. My apparel was mean. I thought it unbecoming a penitent to have his hair powdered. I wore woollen gloves, a patched gown, and dirty shoes; and though I was convinced that the kingdom of God did not consist in meat and drink, yet I resolutely persisted in these voluntary acts of self-denial, because I found in them great promotion of the spiritual life." Out of all this darkness he was gradually delivered, partly by the advice of one or two experienced Christians, and partly by reading such books as Scougal's Life of God in the Soul of Man, Law's Serious Call, Baxter's Call to the Unconverted, Alleine's Alarm to Unconverted Sinners, and Matthew Henry's Commentary. "Above all," he says, "my mind being now more opened and enlarged, **I began to read the Holy Scriptures upon my knees, laying aside all other books, and praying over, if possible, every line and word.** This proved food indeed and drink indeed to my soul. I daily received fresh life, light, and power from above. I got more true knowledge from reading the *Book of God* in one month than I could ever have acquired from all the writings of men." Once taught to understand the glorious liberty of Christ's gospel, Whitefield never turned again to asceticism, legalism, mysticism, or strange views of Christian perfection. The experience received by bitter conflict was most valuable to him. The doctrines of free grace, once thoroughly grasped, took deep root in his heart, and became, as it were, bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh. Of all the little band of Oxford Methodists, none seem to have got hold so soon of clear views of Christ's gospel as he did, and none kept it so unwaveringly to the end.

At the early age of twenty-two Whitefield was admitted to holy orders by Bishop Benson of Gloucester, on Trinity Sunday, 1736. His ordination was not of his own seeking. The bishop heard of his character from Lady Selwyn and others, sent for him, gave him five guineas to buy books, and offered to ordain him, though only twenty-two years old, whenever he wished. This unexpected offer came to him when he was full of scruples about his own fitness for the ministry. It cut the knot and brought him to the point of decision. "I began to think," he says, "that if I held out longer I should fight against God."

Whitefield's first sermon was preached in the very town where he was born, at the church of St. Mary-le-Crypt, Gloucester. His own description of it is the best account that can be given: "Last Sunday, in the afternoon, I preached my first sermon in the church of St. Mary-le-Crypt, where I was baptized, and also first received the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Curiosity, as you may easily guess, drew a large congregation together upon this occasion. The sight at first a little awed me. But I was comforted with a heartfelt sense of the divine presence, and soon found the unspeakable advantage of having been accustomed to public speaking when a boy at school, and of exhorting the prisoners and poor people at their private houses while at the university. By these means I was kept from being daunted overmuch. As I proceeded I perceived the fire kindled, until at last, though so young and amidst a crowd of those who knew me in my childish days, I trust I was enabled to speak with some degree of gospel authority. Some few mocked—but most seemed for the present struck; and I have since heard that a complaint was made to the bishop that I drove fifteen mad the first sermon! The worthy prelate wished that the madness might not be forgotten before next Sunday."

Almost immediately after his ordination, Whitefield went to Oxford and took his degree as Bachelor of Arts. He then commenced his regular ministerial life by undertaking temporary duty at the Tower Chapel, London, for two months. While engaged there he preached continually in many London churches; and among others, in the parish churches of Islington, Bishopsgate, St Dunstan's, St Margaret's, Westminster, and Bow, Cheapside. **From the very first he obtained a degree of popularity such as no preacher, before or since, has probably ever reached.** Whether on week-days or Sundays, wherever he preached, the churches were crowded, and an immense sensation was produced. The plain truth is, that a really eloquent, extempore preacher, preaching the pure gospel with most uncommon gifts of voice and manner, was at that time an entire novelty in London. The congregations were taken by surprise and carried by storm.

From London he removed for two months to Dummer, a little rural parish in Hampshire, near Basingstoke. This was a totally new sphere of action, and he seemed like a man buried alive among poor illiterate people. But he was soon reconciled to it, and thought afterwards that he reaped much profit by conversing with the poor. From Dummer he accepted an invitation, which had been much pressed on him by the Wesleys, to visit the colony of Georgia in North America, and assist in the care of an Orphan House which had been set up near Savannah for the children of colonists. After preaching for a few months in Gloucestershire, and especially at Bristol and Stonehouse, he sailed for America in the latter part of 1737, and continued there about a year. The affairs of this Orphan House, it may be remarked, occupied much of his attention from this period of his life until he died. Though well-meant, it seems to have been a design of very questionable wisdom, and certainly entailed on Whitefield a world of anxiety and responsibility to the end of his days.

Whitefield returned from Georgia in the latter part of the year 1738, partly to obtain priest's orders. Which were conferred on him by his old friend, Bishop Benson, and partly on business connected with the Orphan House. He soon, however, discovered that his position was no longer what it was before he sailed for Georgia. The bulk of the clergy were no longer favorable to him, and regarded him with suspicion as an enthusiast and a fanatic. They were especially scandalized by his preaching the doctrine of regeneration or the new birth, as a thing which many baptized persons greatly needed! The number of pulpits to which he had access rapidly diminished. Church wardens, who had no eyes for drunkenness and impurity, were filled with intense indignation about what they called "breaches of order". Bishops who could tolerate Arianism, Socinianism, and Deism, were filled with indignation at a man who declared fully the atonement of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit, and began to denounce him openly. In short, from this period of his life, Whitefield's field of usefulness within the Church of England narrowed rapidly on every side.

The step which at this juncture gave a turn to the whole current of Whitefield's ministry was his adoption of the system of **open-air preaching**. Seeing that thousands everywhere would attend no place of worship, spent their Sundays in idleness or sin, and were not to be reached by sermons within walls—he resolved, in the spirit of holy aggression, to go out after them "into the highways and hedges," on his Master's principle, and "compel them to come in." His first attempt to do this was among the colliers at Kingswood near Bristol, in February, 1739. After much prayer he one day went to Hannam Mount, and standing upon a hill began to preach to about a hundred colliers upon Matthew 5:1-3. The thing soon became known. The number of hearers rapidly increased, until the congregation amounted to many thousands. His own account of the behavior of these neglected colliers, who had never been in a church in their lives, is deeply affecting: "Having," he writes to a friend, "no righteousness of their own to renounce, they were glad to hear of a Jesus who was a friend to publicans, and came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance. The first discovery of their being affected was the sight of the *white gutters* made by their tears, which plentifully fell down their black cheeks as they came out of their coal-pits. Hundreds of them were soon brought under deep conviction, which, as the event proved, happily ended in a sound and thorough conversion. The change was visible to all, though numbers chose to impute it to anything rather than the finger of God. As the scene was quite new, it often occasioned many inward conflicts. Sometimes, when *twenty thousand* people were before me, I had not in my own apprehension a word to say either to God or them. But I was never totally deserted, and frequently (for to deny it would be lying against God) was so assisted that I knew by happy experience what our Lord meant by saying, "Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." The open skies above me, the prospect of the adjacent fields, with the sight of thousands, some in coaches, some on horseback, and some in the trees, and at times all affected and in tears, was almost too much for me—and quite overcame me."

Two months after this Whitefield began the practice of open-air preaching in London, on April 27, 1739. The circumstances under which this happened were curious. He had gone to Islington to preach for the vicar, his friend Mr. Stonehouse. In the midst of the prayer the churchwardens came to him and demanded his licence for preaching in the diocese of London. Whitefield, of course, had not got this licence any more than any clergyman not regularly officiating in the diocese has at this day. The upshot of the matter was, that *being forbidden by the churchwardens to preach in the pulpit, he went outside after the communion-service, and preached in the churchyard.* "And," says he, "God was pleased to assist me in preaching, and so wonderfully to affect the hearers, that I believe we could have gone singing hymns to prison. Let not the adversaries say, I have thrust myself out of their synagogues. No—they have thrust me out!"

From that day forward he became a constant field-preacher, whenever weather and the season of the year made it possible. Two days afterwards on Sunday, April 29th, he records: "I preached in Moorfields to an exceeding great multitude. Being weakened by my morning's preaching, I refreshed myself in the afternoon by a little sleep, and at five went and preached at Kennington Common, about two miles from London, when no less that *thirty thousand* people were supposed to be present." Henceforth, wherever there were large open spaces round London, wherever there were large bands of idle, godless, Sabbath-breaking people gathered together, in Hackney Fields, Mary-le-bonne Fields, May Fair, Smithfield, Blackheath, Moorfields, and Kennington Common—there went

Whitefield and lifted up his voice for Christ.

The gospel so proclaimed was listened to and greedily received by hundreds who never dreamed of going to a place of worship. The cause of pure religion was advanced, and souls were plucked from the hand of Satan, like brands from the burning. But it was going much too fast for *the Church of England* of those days. The clergy, with a few honorable exceptions, refused entirely to countenance this strange preacher. In the true spirit of the dog in the manger, they neither liked to go after the semi-heathen masses of population themselves, nor liked any one else to do the work for them. The consequence was, that the ministrations of Whitefield in the pulpits of the Church of England from this time almost entirely ceased. He loved the Church in which he had been ordained; he gloried in her Articles; he used her Prayer-book with pleasure. But the Church did not love him, and so lost the use of his services. The plain truth is, that the Church of England of that day was not ready for a man like Whitefield. The Church was too much asleep to understand him, and was vexed at a man who would not keep still and let the devil alone!

The facts of Whitefield's history from this period to the day of his death are almost entirely of one complexion. One year was just like another; and to attempt to follow him would be only going repeatedly over the same ground. From 1739 to the year of his death, 1770, a period of thirty-one years, his life was one uniform employment. *He was eminently a man of one thing, and always about his Master's business.* From Sunday mornings to Saturday nights, from the 1st of January to the 31st of December, excepting when laid aside by illness, he was almost incessantly preaching Christ and going about the world entreating men to repent and come to Christ and be saved. There was hardly a considerable town in England, Scotland, or Wales, that he did not visit as an evangelist. When churches were opened to him he gladly preached in churches; when only chapels could be obtained, he cheerfully preached in chapels. When churches and chapels alike were closed, or were too small to contain his hearers, he was ready and willing to preach in the open air. For thirty-one years he labored in this way, always proclaiming the same glorious gospel, and always, as far as man's eye can judge, with immense effect. In one single Whitsuntide week, after preaching in Moorfields, he received *one thousand letters* from people under spiritual concern, and admitted to the Lord's table three hundred and fifty persons. In the thirty-four years of his ministry it is reckoned that he preached publicly *eighteen thousand times.*

His *journeyings* were prodigious, when the roads and conveyances of his time are considered. He was familiar with "perils in the wilderness and perils in the seas", if ever man was in modern times. He visited Scotland fourteen times, and was nowhere more acceptable or useful than he was in that Bible-loving country. He crossed the Atlantic seven times, backward and forward, in miserable slow sailing ships, and arrested the attention of thousands in Boston, New York, and Philadelphia. He went over to Ireland twice, and on one occasion was almost murdered by an ignorant Popish mob in Dublin. As to England and Wales, he traversed every country in them, from the Isle of Wight to Berwick-on-Tweed, and from the Land's End to the North Foreland.

His regular ministerial work in London for the winter season, when field-preaching was necessarily suspended, was something prodigious. His weekly engagements at the Tabernacle in Tottenham Court Road, which was built for him when the pulpits of the Established Church were closed, comprised the following work: Every Sunday morning, he administered the Lord's Supper to several hundred communicants at half-past six. After this he read prayers, and preached both morning and afternoon. Then he preached again in the evening at half-past five, and concluded by addressing a large society of widows, married people, young men and spinsters, all sitting separately in the area of the Tabernacle, with exhortations suitable to their respective stations. On Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday mornings, he preached regularly at six. On Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Saturday evenings, he delivered lectures. This, it will be observed, made *thirteen sermons a week!* And all this time he was carrying on a large correspondence with people in almost every part of the world.

That any human frame could so long endure the labors that Whitefield went through does indeed seem astonishing. That his life was not cut short by violence, to which he was frequently exposed, is no less amazing. But **he was immortal until his work was done**. He died at last very suddenly at Newbury Port, in North America, on Sunday, September 29th, 1770, at the comparatively early age of *fifty-six*. He was once married to a widow named James, of Abergavenny, who died before him. If we may judge from the little mention made of his wife in his letters, *his marriage does not seem to have contributed much to his happiness.* He left no children—but he left a name far better than that of sons and daughters. Never perhaps was there a man of whom it could be so truly said that *he spent and was spent for Christ* than George Whitefield.

The circumstances and particulars of this great evangelist's end are so deeply interesting, that I shall make no excuse for dwelling on them. It was an end in striking harmony with the tenor of his life. As he had lived for more than thirty years, so he died—preaching to the very last. He literally almost died in harness. "Sudden death", he had often said, "is sudden glory! Whether right or not, I cannot help wishing that I may go off in the same manner. To me it would be worse than death to live to be nursed, and to see friends weeping about me." He had the desire of his heart granted. He was cut down in a single night by a spasmodic fit of asthma, almost before his friends knew that he was ill.

On the morning of Saturday, September 29th, the day before he died, Whitefield set out on horseback from Portsmouth in New Hampshire, in order to fulfill an engagement to preach at Newbury Port on Sunday. On the way, unfortunately, he was earnestly importuned to preach at a place called Exeter, and though feeling very ill, he had not the heart to refuse. A friend remarked before he preached that he looked more uneasy than usual, and said to him, 'Sir, you are more fit to go to bed than to preach!" To this Whitefield replied: "True, sir"; and then turning aside, he clasped his hands together, and looking up, said: "Lord Jesus, I am weary *in* your work—but not *of* your work. If I have not yet finished my course, let me go and speak for you once more in the fields, seal your truth, and come home and die." He then went and preached to a very great multitude in the fields from the text 2 Corinthians 13:5, for the space of nearly *two hours.* It was his last sermon, and a fitting conclusion to his whole career.

An eye-witness has given the following striking account of this closing scene of Whitefield's life: "He rose from his seat, and stood erect. His appearance alone was a powerful sermon. The thinness of his visage, the paleness of his countenance, the evident struggling of the heavenly spark in a decayed body for utterance, were all deeply interesting; the spirit was willing—but the flesh was dying. In this situation he remained several minutes, unable to speak. He then said: "I will wait for the gracious assistance of God, for He will, I am certain, assist me once more to speak in his name." He then delivered perhaps one of his best sermons. The latter part contained the following passage: 'I go; I go to a rest prepared: my sun has given light to many—but now it is about to set—no, to rise to the zenith of immortal glory. I have outlived many on earth—but they cannot outlive me in heaven. Many shall outlive me on earth and live when this body is no more—but there—oh, thought divine! I shall be in a world where time, age, sickness, and sorrow are

unknown. My body fails—but my spirit expands. How willingly would I live forever to preach Christ. But I die to be with him. How brief— comparatively brief—but has been my life compared to the vast labors which I see before me yet to be accomplished. But if I leave now, while so few care about heavenly things, may the God of peace will surely visit you."

After the sermon was over, Whitefield dined with a friend, and then rode on to Newbury Port, though greatly fatigued. On arriving there he supped early, and retired to bed. Tradition says, that as he went up-stairs, with a lighted candle in his hand, he could not resist the inclination to turn around at the head of the stair, and speak to the friends who were assembled to meet him. As he spoke the fire kindled within him, and before he could conclude, the candle which he held in has had actually burned down to the socket. He retired to his bedroom, to come out no more alive. A violent fit of spasmodic asthma seized him soon after he got into bed, and before six o'clock the next morning the great preacher was dead. If ever man was ready for his change, Whitefield was that man! When his time came, he had nothing to do—but die. Where he died there he was buried, in a vault beneath the pulpit of the church where he had engaged to preach. His sepulcher is shown to this very day; and nothing makes the little town where he died so famous as the fact that it contains the bones of George Whitefield.

Such are the leading facts in the life of the prince of English evangelists of a hundred years ago. His personal character, the real extent of his usefulness, and some account of his style of preaching, are subjects which I must reserve for another chapter.

George Whitefield, in my judgment, was so entirely chief and first among the English Reformers of the last century, that I make no apology for offering some further information about him. The real amount of good he did, the peculiar character of his preaching, the private character of the man—are all points that deserve consideration. They are points, I may add, about which there is a vast amount of misconception.

This misconception perhaps is unavoidable, and ought not to surprise us. The materials for forming a correct opinion about such a man as Whitefield are necessarily very scanty. He wrote no book for the millions, of world-wide fame, like Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress." He headed no crusade against an apostate Church, with a nation at his back, and princes on his side, like Martin Luther. He founded no religious denomination, which pinned its faith on his writings and carefully embalmed his best acts and words, like John Wesley. There are Lutherans and Wesleyans in the present day—but there are no Whitefieldites. No! The great evangelist of last century was a simple, sincere man, who lived for one thing only—and that was to preach Christ. If he did that, he cared for nothing else. The records of such a man are large and full in *heaven*, I have no doubt. But they are few and scanty upon *earth*.

We must not forget, beside this, that the many in every age see nothing in a man like Whitefield—but fanaticism and enthusiasm. They abhor everything like "zeal" in religion. They dislike everyone who turns the world upside down, and departs from old traditional ways, and will not let the devil alone. Such people, no doubt, would tell us that the ministry of Whitefield only produced temporary excitement, that his preaching was common-place rant, and that his character had nothing about it to be specially admired. It may be feared that eighteen hundred years ago they would have said much the same of Paul.

The question, *"What good did Whitefield do?"* is one which I answer without the least hesitation. I believe that the direct good which he did to immortal souls was enormous. I will go further—I believe it is incalculable. Credible witnesses in England, Scotland, and America, have placed on record their conviction that he was the means of converting thousands of people. Many, wherever he preached, were not merely pleased, excited, and arrested—but positively turned from sin, and made thorough servants of God. "Numbering the people", I do not forget, is at all times an objectionable practice. God alone can read hearts and discern the wheat from the tares. Many, no doubt, in days of religious excitement, are set down as converted who are not converted at all. But I wish my readers to understand that my high estimate of Whitefield's usefulness is based on a solid foundation. I ask them to mark well what Whitefield's contemporaries thought of the value of his labors.

Franklin, the well-known American philosopher, was a cold-blooded, calculating man, a Quaker by profession, and not likely to form too high an estimate of any minister's work. Yet even he confessed that "it was wonderful to see the change soon made by his preaching in the manners of the inhabitants of Philadelphia. From being thoughtless or indifferent about religion, it seemed as if all the world were growing religious." Franklin himself, it may be remarked, was the leading printer of religious works at Philadelphia; and his readiness to print Whitefield's sermons and journals shows his judgment of the hold that he had on the American mind.

Maclaurin, Willison, and Macculloch, were Scotch ministers whose names are well known north of the Tweed, and the two former of whom deservedly rank high as theological writers. All these have repeatedly testified that Whitefield was made an instrument of doing immense good in Scotland. Willison in particular says, "that God honored him with surprising success among sinners of all ranks and persuasions".

Old Henry Venn, of Huddersfield, was a man of strong good sense, as well as of great grace. His opinion was, that "if the greatness, extent, success, and unselfishness of a man's labors can give him distinction among the children of Christ—then we are warranted to affirm that scarcely any one has equaled Mr. Whitefield". Again he says: "He was abundantly successful in his vast labors. The seals of his ministry, from first to last, I am persuaded, were more than could be credited could the number be fixed. This is certain, his amazing popularity was only from his usefulness; for he no sooner opened his mouth as a preacher, than God commanded an extraordinary blessing upon his word."

John Newton was a sincere man, as well as an eminent minister of the gospel. His testimony is: "That which finished Mr. Whitefield's character as a shining light, and is now his crown of rejoicing, was the singular success which the Lord was pleased to give him in winning souls. It seemed as if he never preached in vain. Perhaps there is hardly a place in all the extensive compass of his labors where some may not yet be found who thankfully acknowledge him as their spiritual father."

John Wesley did not agree with Whitefield on several theological points of great importance. But when he preached his funeral sermon, he said: "Have we read or heard of any person who called so many thousands, so many myriads of sinners to repentance? Above all, have we read or heard of any one who has been the blessed instrument of bringing so many sinners from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God?"

Valuable as these testimonies undoubtedly are, there is one point which they leave totally untouched. That point is the quantity of *indirect* which that Whitefield did. Great as the direct effects of his labors were, I believe firmly that the indirect effects were even greater. His ministry was made a blessing to thousands who never perhaps either saw or heard him.

He was among the first in the eighteenth century who revived attention to the old truths which produced the Protestant Reformation. His constant assertion of the doctrines taught by the Reformers, his repeated reference to the Articles and Homilies, and the divinity of the best English theologians, obliged many to think, and roused them to examine their own principles. If the whole truth was known, I believe it would prove that the rise and progress of the Evangelical body in the Church of England received a mighty impulse from George Whitefield.

But this is not the only indirect good that Whitefield did in his day. He was among the first to show the right way to meet the attacks of infidels and sceptics on Christianity. He saw clearly that the most powerful weapon against such men is not cold, metaphysical reasoning and dry critical disquisition—but *preaching* the whole gospel—but *living* the whole gospel—and *spreading* the whole gospel. It was not the writings of Leland, and the younger Sherlock, and Waterland, and Leslie, which halted the flood of infidelity, one half so much as the preaching of Whitefield and his companions. They were the men who were the true champions of Christianity. Infidels are seldom shaken by a mere *abstract reasoning*. The surest argument against them are gospel *truth* and gospel *life*.

Above all, he was the very first Englishman who seems to have thoroughly understood what Dr. Chalmers aptly called the aggressive system. He was the first to see that Christ's ministers must do the work of *fishermen*. They must not wait for souls to come to them—but must go after souls, and "compel them to come in". He did not sit tamely by his fire side, like a cat in a rainy day, mourning over the wickedness of the land. He went forth to beard the devil in his high places. He attacked sin and wickedness face to face, and gave them no peace. He dived into holes and corners after sinners! He hunted out ignorance and vice wherever they could be found. In short, he set on foot a system of action which, up to his time, had been comparatively unknown in this country—but a system which, once commenced, has never ceased to be employed down to the present day. City missions, town missions, district visiting societies, open-air preachings, home missions, special services, theater preachings, are all evidences that the value of the "aggressive system" is now thoroughly recognized by all the Churches. We understand better how to go to work now than we did a hundred years ago. But let us never forget that the *first* man to commence operations of this kind was George Whitefield, and let us give him the credit he deserves.

The peculiar character of Whitefield's preaching is the subject which next demands some consideration. Men naturally wish to know what was the secret of his unparalleled success. The subject is one surrounded with considerable difficulty, and it is no easy matter to form a correct judgment about it. The common idea of many people, that he was a mere common-place ranting Methodist, remarkable for nothing but great fluency, strong doctrine, and a loud voice—will not bear a moment's investigation.

It is a fact that no preacher in England has ever succeeded in arresting the attention of such crowds as Whitefield constantly addressed around London. No preacher has ever been so universally popular in every country that he visited—in England, Scotland and America. No preacher has ever retained his hold on his hearers so entirely as he did for thirty-four years. His popularity never waned. It was as great at the end of his day as it was at the beginning. Wherever he preached, men would leave their workshop and employments to gather round him, and hear like those who heard for eternity. This of itself is a great fact. To command the ear of "the masses" for a quarter of a century, and to be preaching incessantly the whole time, is an evidence of no common power.

It is another fact that Whitefield's preaching produced a powerful effect on people in *every rank* of life. He won the admiration of high as well as low, of rich as well as poor, of learned as well as unlearned. if his preaching had been popular with none but the uneducated and the poor, we might have thought it possible that there was little in it but rhetoric and noise. But, so far from this being the case, he seems to have been acceptable to numbers of the nobility and gentry. The Marquis of Lothian, the Earl of Leven, the Earl of Buchan, Lord Rae, Lord Dartmouth, Lord James A. Gordon, might be named among his warmest admirers, beside Lady Huntingdon and a host of ladies.

It is a fact that eminent critics and literary men, like Lord Bolingbroke and Lord Chesterfield, were frequently his delighted hearers. Even the cold artificial Chesterfield was known to warm under Whitefield's eloquence. Bolingbroke said, *"He is the most extraordinary man in our times. He has the most commanding eloquence I ever heard in any person."* Franklin the philosopher spoke in no measured terms of his preaching powers. Hume the historian declared that it was worth going twenty miles to hear him.

Now, facts like these can never be explained away. They completely upset the theory that Whitefield's preaching was nothing but noise and rant. Bolingbroke, Chesterfield, Hume, and Franklin, were not men to be easily deceived. They were no poor judges of eloquence. They were probably among the best qualified critics of their day. Their unbought and unbiased opinions appear to me to supply unanswerable proof that there must have been something very extraordinary about Whitefield's preaching. But still, after all, the question remains to be answered, What was the secret of Whitefield's unrivaled popularity and effectiveness? And I frankly admit that, with the scanty materials we possess for forming our judgement, the question is a very hard one to answer.

The man who turns to the *seventy-five sermons* published under Whitefield's name will probably be much disappointed. He will see in them no commanding intellect or grasp of mind. He will find in them no deep philosophy, and no very striking thoughts. It is only fair, however, to say, that by far the greater part of these sermons were taken down in *shorthand* by reporters, and published without correction. These worthy men appear to have done their work very indifferently, and were evidently ignorant alike of stopping and paragraphing, of grammar and of gospel. The consequence is, that many passages in these seventy-five sermons are what Bishop Latimer would have called a "mingle-mangle," and what we call in this day "a complete mess." No wonder that poor Whitefield says, in one of his last letters, dated September 26, 1769, "I wish you had advertised against the publication of my last sermon. It is not verbatim as I delivered it. In some places it makes me speak false concord, and even nonsense. In others the sense and connection are destroyed by injudicious, disjointed paragraphs, and the whole is entirely unfit for the public review."

I venture, however, to say boldly that, with all their faults, Whitefield's printed sermons will well repay a candid perusal. The reader must recollect that they were not carefully prepared for the press, like the sermons of Melville or Bradley—but wretchedly reported, paragraphed, and stopped, and he must read with this continually before his mind. Moreover, he must remember that English composition for *speaking* to hearers, and English composition for private *reading*, are almost like two different languages, so that

sermons which "preach" well "read" badly. Let him, I say, remember these two things, and judge accordingly, and I am much mistaken if he does not find much to admire in many of Whitefield's sermons. For my own part, I must plainly say that I think they are greatly underrated.

Let me now point out what appear to have been the distinctive characteristics of Whitefield's **preaching**.

For one thing, Whitefield preached a singularly *pure gospel*. Few men, perhaps, ever gave their hearers so much *wheat*—and so little *chaff*. He did not get up to talk about his party, his cause, his interest or his office. He was perpetually telling you about your sins, your heart, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, the absolute need of repentance, faith, and holiness—in the way that the Bible presents these mighty subjects. "Oh, the righteousness of Jesus Christ!" he would often say: "I must be excused if I mention it in almost all my sermons." Preaching of this kind is the preaching that God delights to honor. It must be pre-eminently a manifestation of truth.

For another thing, Whitefield's preaching was singularly *clear* and *simple*. His hearers, whatever they might think of his doctrine, could never fail to understand what he meant. His style of speaking was easy, plain, and conversational. He seemed to abhor long and involved sentences. He always saw his mark, and went directly at it. He seldom troubled his hearers with abstruse argument and intricate reasoning. Simple Bible statements, apt illustrations, and pertinent anecdotes, were the more common weapons that he used. The consequence was that his hearers always understood him. He never shot above their heads. Here again is one grand element of a preacher's success. He must labor by all means to be *understood*. It was a wise saying of Archbishop Usher, "To make easy things seem hard is every man's work; but to make hard things easy is the work of a great preacher".

For another thing, Whitefield was a singularly *bold* and *direct* preacher. He never used that indefinite expression "we", which seems so peculiar to English pulpit oratory, and which only leaves a hearer's mind in a state of misty confusion. He met men face to face, like one who had a message from God to them, "I have come here to speak to *you* about *your* soul". The result was that many of his hearers used often to think that his sermons were specially meant for themselves. He was not content, as many, with sticking on a meager tail-piece of application at the end of a long discourse. On the contrary*, a constant vein of application* ran through all his sermons. "This is for you—and this is for you." His hearers were never let alone.

Another striking feature in Whitefield's preaching was his singular *power of description*. The Arabians have a proverb which says, *"He is the best orator who can turn men's ears into eyes!"* Whitefield seems to have had a peculiar faculty of doing this. He dramatized his subject so thoroughly that it seemed to move and walk before your eyes. He used to draw such vivid pictures of the things he was handling, that his hearers could believe they actually saw and heard them. "On one occasion", says one of his biographers, "Lord Chesterfield was among his hearers. The great preacher, in describing the miserable condition of an unconverted sinner, illustrated the subject by describing a blind beggar. The night was dark, and the road dangerous. The poor mendicant was deserted by his dog near the edge of a precipice, and had nothing to aid him in groping his way but his staff. Whitefield so warmed with his subject, and enforced it with such graphic power, that the whole auditory was kept in breathless silence, as if it saw the movements of the poor old man; and at length, when the beggar was about to take the fatal step which would have hurled him down the precipice to certain destruction, Lord Chesterfield actually made a rush forward to save him, exclaiming aloud, "He is gone! he is gone!" The noble Lord had been so entirely carried away by the preacher, that he forgot the whole was a picture."

Another leading characteristic of Whitefield's preaching was his tremendous *earnestness*. One poor uneducated man said of him, that *"he preached like a lion!"* He succeeded in showing people that he at least believed all he was saying—and that his heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, were bent on making them believe it too. His sermons were not like the morning and evening gun at Portsmouth, a kind of formal discharge, fired off as a matter of course, which disturbs nobody. They were all life and fire. There was no getting away from them. Sleep was next to impossible. You must listen whether you liked it or not. There was a holy violence about him which firmly took your attention by storm. You were fairly carried off your legs by his energy before you had time to consider what you would do. This, we may be sure, was one secret of his success. We must convince men that we are in earnest ourselves, if we want to be believed. The difference between one preacher and another, is often not so much in the things said, as in the *manner* in which they are said.

It is recorded by one of his biographers that an American gentleman once went to hear him, for the first time, in consequence of the report he heard of his preaching powers. The day was rainy, the congregation comparatively thin, and the beginning of the sermon rather heavy. Our American friend began to say to himself, "This man is no great wonder after all". He looked round, and saw the congregation as little interested as himself. One old man, in front of the pulpit, had fallen asleep. But all at once Whitefield stopped short. His countenance changed. And then he suddenly broke forth in an altered tone: "If I had come to speak to you in my own name, you might well rest your elbows on your knees, and your heads on your hands, and sleep; and once in a while look up, and say, What is this babbler talking of? But I have not come to you in my own name. No! I have come to you in the name of the Lord Almighty!" (here he brought down his hand and foot with a force that made the building ring) "and I must and will be heard!" The congregation startled. The old man woke up at once. "Ay, ay!" cried Whitefield, fixing his eyes on him, "I have waked you up, have I? I meant to do it. I am not come here to preach to stocks and stones! I have come to you in the name of the Lord God Almighty, and I must, and will, have an audience!" The hearers were stripped of their apathy at once. Every word of the sermon after this was heard with deep attention, and the American gentleman never forgot it.

One more feature in Whitefield's preaching deserves special notice; and that is, the immense amount of *pathos* and *feeling* which it always contained. It was no uncommon thing with him to weep profusely in the pulpit. Cornelius Winter, who often accompanied him in his latter journeys, went so far as to say that he hardly ever knew him to get through a sermon without some tears. There seems to have been nothing of *affectation* in this. He felt intensely for the souls before him, and his feelings found an outlet in tears. Of all the ingredients of his success in preaching, none, I suspect, were so powerful as this. It awakened affections and touched secret springs in men, which no amount of reasonable and demonstration could have moved. It smoothed down the prejudices which many had conceived against him. *They could not hate the man who wept so much over their souls!* "I came to hear you", said one to him, "with my pocket full of stones, intending to break your head; but your sermon got the better of me—and broke my heart!" Once become satisfied that a man loves you—and you will listen gladly to anything he has to say.

I will now ask the reader to add to this analysis of Whitefield's preaching, that even by nature he possessed several of the rarest gifts which fit a man to be an orator. His *action* was perfect—so perfect that even Garrick, the famous actor, gave it unqualified praise. His

voice was as wonderful as his action—so powerful that he could make thirty thousand people hear him at once, and yet so musical and well-toned that some said he could raise tears by his pronunciation of the word "Mesopotamia". His *manner* in the pulpit was so wondrously graceful and fascinating that it was said that no one could hear him for five minutes without forgetting that he squinted. His *fluency* and *command* of appropriate language were of the highest order, prompting him always to use the right word and to put it in the right place. Add, I repeat, these gifts to the things already mentioned, and then consider whether there is not sufficient in our hands to account for his power and popularity as a preacher.

For my own part, I have no hesitation in saying that I believe no English preacher has ever possessed such a combination of excellent qualifications as Whitefield. Some, no doubt, have surpassed him in some of his gifts; others, perhaps, have equaled him in others. But for a well-balanced combination of some of the finest gifts that a preacher can possess, united with *an unrivaled voice, manner, delivery, action, and command of words*, Whitefield, I repeat my opinion, stands alone. No Englishman, I believe, dead or alive, has ever equaled him. And I suspect we shall always find that, just in proportion as preachers have approached that wondrous combination of rare gifts which Whitefield possessed, just in that very proportion have they attained what one defines *true eloquence* to be—"a strange power of making themselves believed".

The inner life and personal character of this great spiritual hero of the last century are a branch of my subject on which I shall not dwell at any length. In fact, there is no necessity for my doing so. He was a singularly *transparent* man. There was nothing about him requiring apology or explanation. His faults and good qualities were both clear and plain as noon-day. I shall therefore content myself with simply pointing out the prominent features of his **CHARACTER**, so far as they can be gathered from his letters and the accounts of his contemporaries, and then bring my sketch of him to a conclusion.

He was a man of deep and unfeigned **humility**. No one can read the fourteen hundred letters of his, without observing this. Again and again, in the very zenith of his popularity, we find him speaking of himself and his works in the lowliest terms. "God be merciful to me a sinner", he writes on September 11, 1753, "and give me, for his infinite mercy's sake, an humble, thankful, and resigned heart. Truly I am viler than the vilest, and stand amazed at his employing such a wretch as I am." "Let none of my friends", he writes on December 27, 1753, "cry to such a sluggish, lukewarm, unprofitable worm, Spare yourself. Rather spur me on, I beg you, with an Awake, you sleeper, and begin to do something for your God." Language like this, no doubt, seems foolishness and affectation to the world; but the well-instructed Bible reader will see in it the heart-felt experience of all the brightest saints. It is the language of men like Baxter, and Brainerd, and M"Cheyne. It is the same mind that was in the inspired Apostle Paul. Those that have most light and grace are always the humblest men.

He was a man of burning **love to our Lord Jesus Christ**. That name which is "above every name" stands out incessantly in all his correspondence. Like fragrant ointment, it gives a savor to all his communications. He seems never weary of saying something about Jesus. "My Master", as George Herbert said, is never long out of his mind. His love, his atonement, his precious blood, his righteousness, his readiness to receive sinners, his patience and tender dealing with saints—are themes which appear ever fresh before his eyes. In this respect, at least, there is a curious likeness between him and that glorious Scotch divine, Samuel Rutherford.

He was a man of unwearied **diligence** and **laboriousness** about his Master's business. It would be difficult, perhaps, to name any one in the annals of the Churches who worked so hard for Christ, and so thoroughly spent himself in his service. Henry Venn, in a funeral sermon for him, preached at Bath, bore the following testimony: "What a sign and wonder was this man of God in the greatness of his labors! One cannot but stand amazed that his mortal frame could, for the space of near thirty years, without interruption, sustain the weight of them; for what so trying to the human frame in youth especially, as long-continued, frequent, and violent straining of the lungs? Who that knows their structure would think it possible that a person little above the age of manhood could speak in a single week, and that for years—but in general *forty hours*, and in very many weeks *sixty* hours—and that to thousands; and after this labor, instead of taking any rest, could be offering up prayers and intercessions, with hymns and spiritual songs, as his manner was, in every house to which he was invited? The truth is, that in point of labor this extraordinary servant of God did as much in a few weeks as most of those who exert themselves are able to do in the space of a year!"

He was to the end a man of eminent **self-denial**. His style of living was most simple. He was remarkable to a proverb for *moderation* in eating and drinking. All through life he was an early riser. His usual hour for getting up was four o'clock, both in summer and winter; and equally punctual was he in retiring about ten at night. A man of prayerful habits, he frequently spent whole nights in reading and devotion. Cornelius Winter, who often slept in the same room, says that he would sometimes rise during the night for this purpose. He cared little for money, except as a help to the cause of Christ, and refused it, when pressed upon him for his own use, once to the amount of £7,000. He amassed no fortune, and founded no wealthy family. The little money he left behind him at his death arose entirely from the legacies of friends. The Pope's coarse saying about Luther, "This German beast does not love gold!", might have been equally applied to Whitefield.

He was a man of remarkable **unselfishness**, and **singleness of eye**. He seemed to live only for two objects—but the glory of God and the salvation of souls. Of secondary and covert objects he knew nothing at all. He raised no *party* of followers who took his name. He established no *denominational* system, of which his own writings should be cardinal elements. A favorite expression of his is most characteristic of the man: "Let the name of George Whitefield perish—so long as Christ is exalted!"

He was a man of a singularly **happy and cheerful spirit**. No one who saw him could ever doubt that he enjoyed his religion. Tried as he was in many ways throughout his ministry—but slandered by some, despised by others, misrepresented by false brethren, opposed everywhere by the ignorant clergy of his time, worried by incessant controversy—but his elasticity never failed him. He was eminently a rejoicing Christian, whose very demeanor recommended his Master's service. A venerable lady of New York, after his death, when speaking of the influences by which the Spirit won her heart to God, used these remarkable words, "Mr. Whitefield was so cheerful that it tempted me to become a Christian".

Last—but not least, he was a man of extraordinary **charity**, **catholicity**, and **liberality** in his religion. He knew nothing of that narrow-minded feeling which makes some men imagine that everything must be barren—outside their own camps, and that their own party has got a complete monopoly of truth and heaven. He loved all who loved the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. He measured all by the measure which the angels use, "Did they profess repentance towards God, faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, and holiness of conversation?" If they did, they were as his brethren. His soul was with such men, by whatever *name* they were called. Minor

differences were wood, hay, and stubble to him. The marks of the Lord Jesus were the only marks he cared for. This catholicity is the more remarkable when the spirit of the times he lived in is considered. Even the Erskines, in Scotland, wanted him to preach for no other denomination but their own—namely, the Secession Church. He asked them, "Why only for them?"—and received the notable answer that "they were the Lord's people." This was more than Whitefield could stand. He asked "if there were no other Lord's people but themselves;" he told them, "if all others were the devil's people—they certainly had more need to be preached to;" and he wound up by informing them, that "if the Pope himself would lend him his pulpit, he would gladly proclaim the righteousness of Christ in it!" To this catholicity of spirit, he adhered all his days. If other Christians *misrepresented* him—he forgave them; and it they refused to work with him—he still loved them. Nothing could be a more weighty testimony against narrow-mindedness than his request, made shortly before his death, that, when he did died, John Wesley should be asked to preach his funeral sermon. Wesley and he had long ceased to agree about Calvinistic points; but Whitefield, to the very last, was determined to forget minor differences, and to regard Wesley as Calvin did Luther, "only as a good servant of Jesus Christ." On another occasion a censorious professor of religion asked him "whether he thought they would see John Wesley in heaven?" "No, sir," was the striking answer; "He will be so near the throne, and we shall be at such a distance, that we shall hardly get a sight of him!"

Far be it from me to say that the subject of this chapter was a man without **faults**. Like all God's saints, he was an imperfect creature. He sometimes erred, in judgment. He often drew rash conclusions about Providence, and mistook his own inclination for God's leadings. He was frequently hasty both with his tongue and his pen. He had no business to say that "Archbishop Tillotson knew no more of the gospel than Mahomet." He was wrong to set down some people as the Lord's enemies, and others as the Lord's friends so precipitately and positively as he sometimes did. He was to blame for denouncing many of the clergy as "letter-learned Pharisees," because they could not receive the doctrine of the new birth. But still, after all this has been said, there can be no doubt that in the main, he was an eminently holy, self-denying, and consistent man. "The faults of his character," says an American writer, "were like spots on the sun—but detected without much difficulty by any cool and careful observer who takes pains to look for them—but to all practical purposes lost in one general and genial effulgence." Well indeed would it be for the Churches of our day, if God was to give them more ministers like the great evangelist of England a hundred years ago!

A short extract from the conclusion of a sermon preached by Whitefield on Kennington Common, may be interesting to some readers, and may serve to give, them some faint idea of the great preacher's style. It was a sermon on the text, "What do you think of Christ?" (Matt. 22:42.)

"O my brethren, my heart is enlarged towards you. I trust I feel something of that hidden but powerful presence of Christ, while I am preaching to you. Indeed it is sweet—but it is exceedingly comfortable. All the harm I wish you who without cause are my enemies, is that you felt the like. Believe me, though it would be hell to my soul to return to a natural state again, yet I would willingly change states with you for a little while, that you might know what it is to have Christ dwelling in your hearts by faith.

Do not turn your backs. Do not let the devil hurry you away. Be not afraid of convictions. Do not think worse of the doctrine because preached outside the church walls. Our Lord, in the days of his flesh, preached on a mount, in a ship, and a field; and I am persuaded many have felt his gracious presence here. Indeed, we speak what we know. Do not therefore reject the kingdom of God against yourselves. Be so wise as to receive our witness.

"I cannot, I will not let you go. Stay a little, and let us reason together. However lightly *you* may esteem your souls, I know our Lord has set an unspeakable value on them. He thought them worthy of his most precious blood. I beseech you, therefore, O sinners, be reconciled to God. I hope you do not fear being accepted in the Beloved. Behold, he calls you. Behold, he follows you with his mercy, and has sent forth his servants into the highways and hedges to compel you to come in.

"Remember, then, that at such an hour of such a day, in such a year, in this place, you were all told what you ought to think concerning Jesus Christ. If you now perish, it will not be from lack of knowledge. I am free from the blood of you all. You cannot say I have been preaching damnation to you. You cannot say I have, like legal preachers, been requiring you to make bricks without straw. I have not bidden you to make yourselves saints and then come to God. I have offered you salvation on as cheap terms as you can desire. I have offered you Christ's whole wisdom, Christ's whole righteousness, Christ's whole sanctification and eternal redemption, if you will but believe on him. If you say you cannot believe, you say right; for faith, as well as every other blessing, is the gift of God. But then wait upon God, and who knows but he may have mercy on you.

"Why do we not entertain more loving thoughts of Christ? Do you think he will have mercy on others and not on you? Are you not sinners? Did not Jesus Christ come into the world to save sinners?

"If you say you are the chief of sinners, I answer that will be no hindrance to your salvation. Indeed it will not, if you lay hold on Christ by faith. Read the Gospels, and see how kindly he behaved to his disciples, who had fled from and denied him. 'Go, tell my brethren,' says he. He did not say, 'Go, tell those *traitors*,' but, 'Go, tell my *brethren* and Peter.' It is as though he had said, 'Go, tell my brethren in general, and Peter in particular, that I am risen. Oh, comfort his poor drooping heart. Tell him I am reconciled to him. Bid him weep no more so bitterly. For though with oaths and curses he thrice denied me, yet I have died for his sins; I have risen again for his justification: I freely forgive him all." Thus slow to anger and of great kindness, was our all-merciful High Priest. And do you think he has changed his nature and forgets poor sinners, now he is exalted to the right hand of God? No; he is the same yesterday, today, and forever; and sits there only to make intercession for us.

"Come, then, you harlots; come, you publicans; come, you most abandoned sinners, come and believe on Jesus Christ. Though the whole world despise you and cast you out, yet he will not disdain to take you up. Oh amazing, oh infinitely condescending love! Even you, he will not be ashamed to call his brethren. How will you escape if you neglect such a glorious offer of salvation? What would the damned spirits now in the prison of hell give if Christ was so freely offered to them? And why are we not lifting up our eyes in torments? Does any one out of this great multitude dare say he does not deserve damnation? Why are we left, and others taken away by death? What is this but an instance of God's free grace, and a sign of his good-will toward us? Let God's goodness lead us to repentance. Oh, let there be joy in heaven over some of you repenting!"

Toplady and his Ministry

J. C. Ryle, 1878

"Ask the former generation. Pay attention to the experience of our ancestors." Job 8:8

A *perfect orchestra* contains many various instruments of music. Each of these instruments has its own merit and value; but some of them are curiously unlike others. Some of them are dependent on a player's breath, and some on his skill of hand. Some of them are large, and some of them are small. Some of them produce very gentle sounds, and some of them very loud. But all of them are useful in their place and way. Composers like Handel, and Mozart, and Mendelssohn, find work for all. There is work for the flageolet as well as for the trumpet, and work for the violoncello as well as for the organ. Separately and alone, some of the instruments may appear harsh and unpleasant. Combined together and properly played, they fill the ear with one mighty volume of harmonious sounds.

Thoughts such as these come across my mind when I survey the spiritual champions of England a hundred years ago. I see among the leaders of religious revival in that day men of singularly varied characteristics. They were each in their way eminent instruments for good in the hands of the Holy Spirit. From each of them sounded forth the word of God throughout the land with no uncertain sound. Yet some of these good men were strangely compounded, peculiarly constituted, and oddly framed. And to none, perhaps, does the remark apply more thoroughly than to the subject of these remarks, the well-known hymn-writer, Augustus Toplady.

I should think no account of English religion in the last century complete which did not supply some information about this remarkable man. In some respects, I am bold to say, not one of his contemporaries surpassed him, and hardly any equaled him. He was a man of rare grace and gifts, and one who left his mark very deeply on his own generation. For soundness in the faith, singleness of eye, and devotedness of life—he deserves to be ranked with Whitefield, or Grimshaw, or Romaine. Yet with all this, he was a man in whom there was a most extraordinary *mixture of grace and infirmity*. Hundreds, unhappily, know much of his infirmities—who know little of his graces. I shall endeavor in the following pages to—supply a few materials for forming a just estimate of his character.

Few spiritual heroes of the last century, I must freely confess, have suffered more from the lack of a good biographer, than Toplady. Be the cause what it may, a real life of the man was never written. The only memoir of him is as meager a production as can possibly be conceived. It is perhaps only fair to remember that he was an only child, and that he died unmarried; so that he had neither brother, sister, son nor daughter, to gather up his remains. Moreover, he was one who lived much in his study and among his books, spent much time in private communion with God, and went very little into society. Like Romaine, he was not what the world would call a congenial man. He had very few intimate friends—and was, probably, more *feared* and *admired*—than *loved*. But be the reasons what they may, the fact is undeniable that there is no good biography of Toplady. The result is, that there is hardly any man of his caliber in the last century of whom so very little is known.

The principal facts of Toplady's life are few, and soon told. He was brought up by his widowed mother with the utmost care and tenderness, and retained throughout life a deep and grateful sense of his obligations to her. For some reason, which we do not know now, she appears to have settled at Exeter after her husband's death; and to this circumstance we may probably trace her son's subsequent appointment to cures of souls in Devonshire. Young Toplady was sent at an early age to Westminster School, and showed considerable ability there. After passing through Westminster, he was entered as a student of Trinity College, Dublin, and took his degree there as Bachelor of Arts. He was ordained a clergyman in the year 1762; but I am unable to ascertain where, or by what bishop he was ordained. Shortly after his ordination he was appointed to the living of Blagdon, in Somersetshire—but did not hold it long. He was then appointed to Venn Ottery, with Harpford, in Devonshire, a small parish near Sidmouth. This post he finally exchanged, in 1768, for the rural parish of Broad Hembury, near Honiton, in Devonshire, a cure which he retained until his death.

In the year 1775 he was compelled, by the state of his health, to remove from Devonshire to London, and became for a short time preacher at a Chapel in Orange Street, Leicester Square. He seems, however, to have derived no material benefit from the change of climate; and at last died of decline in the year 1778, at the early age of thirty-eight.

The story of Toplady's inner life and religious history is, simple and short; but it presents some features of great interest. The work of God seems to have begun in his heart, when he was only sixteen years old, under the following circumstances. He was staying at a place called Codymain, in Ireland, and was there led by God's providence to hear a layman named Morris preach in a barn. The text, Ephesians 2:13, "You who once were far off—are made near by the blood of Christ". The address came home to young Toplady's conscience with such power, that from that time he became a new man, and a thorough-going professor of vital Christianity. This was in August 1756.

He himself in after-life referred frequently to the circumstance of his conversion with special thankfulness. He says in 1768: "Strange that I, who had so long sat under the means of grace in England, should be brought near to God in an obscure part of Ireland, amidst a handful of God's people met together in a barn, and under the ministry of one who could hardly spell his name! Surely it was the Lord's doing, and is marvelous! The excellency of such power must be of God, and cannot be of man. The regenerating Spirit breathes not only on *whom*—but likewise *when*, *where*, and *as*—he wills."

Although converted and made a new creature in Christ Jesus, Toplady does not seem to have come to a full knowledge of the gospel in all its perfection, for at least two years. Like most of God's children, he had to fight his way into *full light* through many defective opinions, and was only by slow degrees brought to complete establishment in the faith. His experience in this matter, be it remembered, is only that of the vast majority of true Christians. Like infants, when they are born into the world, God's children are not born again in the full possession of all their spiritual faculties; and it is well and wisely ordered that it is so. What we win easily, we seldom value sufficiently. The very fact that believers have to struggle and fight hard before they get hold of real soundness in the faith, helps to make them prize it more when they have attained it. The truths which cost us a battle, are precisely those which we grasp most firmly, and never let go.

Toplady's own account of his early experience on this point is distinct and explicit. He says: "Though awakened in 1756, I was not led into a clear and full view of all the doctrines of grace, until the year 1758, when, through the great goodness of God, my Arminian

prejudices received an effectual shock in reading Dr. Manton's sermons on the seventeenth chapter of John. I shall remember the years 1756 and 1758 with gratitude and joy, in the heaven of heavens to all eternity."

In the year 1774, Toplady gave the following curious account of his experience at this period of his life, "It pleased God to deliver me from the *Arminian snare* before I was quite eighteen. Up to that period there was not (I confess it with abasement!) a more haughty and violent *free-wilier* within the compass of the four seas. One instance of my warm and ignorant zeal occurs now to my memory. About a year before divine goodness gave me *eyes* to discern, and a *heart* to embrace the truth, I was haranguing one day in company, on the universality of grace and the power of free agency. A good old gentleman, now with God, rose from his chair, and coming to me, held me by one of my coat-buttons, while he mildly said, "My dear sir, there are marks of spirituality in your conversation, though tinged with an unhappy mixture of pride and self-righteousness. You have been speaking largely in favor of free-will; but from *arguments* let us come to *experience*. Do let me ask you one question, How was it with you when the Lord laid hold on you in effectual calling? Had you any hand in obtaining that grace? Nay, would you not have resisted and baffled it—if God's Spirit had left you alone in the hand of your own counsel?"

I felt the conclusiveness of these simple but forcible interrogations more strongly than I was then willing to acknowledge. But, blessed be God, I have since been enabled to acknowledge the freeness of his grace, and to sing, what I trust will be my everlasting song, "Not unto me, Lord, not unto me—but unto your name give the glory."

From this time to the end of his life, a period of twenty years, Toplady held right onward in his Christian course, and never seems to have swerved or turned aside for a single day. His attachment to Calvinistic views of theology grew with his growth, and strengthened with his strength, and undoubtedly made him think too harshly of all who favored Arminianism. It is more than probable, too, that it gave him the reputation of being a narrow-minded and sour divine, and made many keep aloof from him, and depreciate him. But no one ever pretended to doubt his extraordinary devotedness and singleness of eye—or to question his purity and holiness of life. From one cause or another, however, he appears always to have stood alone—and to have had little fellowship with his fellow-men. The result was, that throughout life—he appears to have been little known and little understood—but most loved where he was most known.

One would like much to hear what young Toplady was doing between the date of his conversion in 1756, and his ordination in 1762. We can only guess, from the fact that he studied Manton before he was eighteen, that he was probably reading hard, and storing his mind with knowledge, which he turned to good account in after-life. But there is an utter dearth of all information about our hero at this period of his life. We only know that he took upon himself the office of a minister, not only as scholar, and as an outward professor of religion—but as an honest man. He says himself, that "he subscribed the articles and liturgy from principle; and that he did not believe them merely because he subscribed them—but subscribed them because he believed them."

One would like, furthermore, to know exactly where he began his ministry, and in what parish he was first heard as a preacher of the gospel. But I can find out nothing about these points. One interesting fact about his early preaching, I gather from a curious letter which he wrote to Lady Huntingdon in 1774. In that letter he says: "As to the doctrines of special and discriminating grace, I have thus much to observe. For the first four years after I was ordained, I dwelt chiefly on the general outlines of the gospel in this remote corner of my public ministry. I preached of little else but of *justification by faith alone*, in the righteousness and atonement of Christ, and of that *personal holiness* without which no man shall see the Lord. My reasons for thus narrowing the truths of God were these two (I speak it with humiliation and repentance):

1. I thought these points were sufficient to convey as clear an idea as was absolutely necessary of salvation.

2. And secondly, I was partly afraid to go any further.

"God himself (for none but he could do it) gradually freed me from that fear. And as he never at any time permitted me to deliver, or even to insinuate anything contradictory to his truth, so has he been graciously pleased, for seven or eight years past, to open my mouth to make known the entire mystery of the gospel, as far as his Spirit has enlightened me into it. The consequence of my first plan of operations was, that the generality of my hearers were *pleased*—but only few were *converted*. The result of my latter deliverance from worldly *wisdom* and worldly *fear* is—that multitudes have been very angry; but the conversions which God has given me reason to hope he has wrought, have been multiplied. Thus I can testify, so far as I have been concerned, the usefulness of preaching predestination; or, in other words—of tracing salvation and redemption to their first source."

An anecdote related by Toplady himself deserves repetition, as a curious illustration of the habits of clergymen at the time when he was ordained, and his superiority to the habits of his contemporaries. He says: "I was buying some books in the spring of 1762, a month or two before I was ordained, from a very respectable London bookseller. After the business was over, he took me to the furthest end of his long shop, and said in a low voice, 'Sir, you will soon be ordained, and I suppose you have not laid in a very great stock of sermons. I can supply you with as many sets as you please, all original, very excellent ones, and for a trifle.' My answer was: 'I certainly shall never be a customer to you in that way; for I am of opinion that the man who cannot, or will not make his own sermons, is quite unfit to wear the gown. How could you think of my buying ready-made sermons? I would much sooner buy ready-made clothes." His answer shocked me. 'Nay, young gentleman, do not be surprised at my offering you ready-made sermons, for I assure you I have sold ready made sermons to many a bishop in my time!' My reply was 'My good sir, if you have any concern for the credit of the Church of England, never tell that news to anybody else forever.'"

The manner of Toplady's life, during the fifteen or sixteen years of his short ministry, may be gathered from a diary which he wrote in 1768, and kept up for about a year. This diary is a far more interesting record of a good man's life than such documents ordinarily are, and gives a very favorable impression of the writer's character and habits. It leaves the impression that he was eminently a man of one thing, and entirely engrossed with his Master's business—much alone, keeping little company, and always either preaching, visiting his people, reading, writing, or praying. If the diary had been kept up for a few years longer, it would have thrown immense light on many things in Toplady's ministerial history. But even in its present state, it is the most valuable record we possess about him, and there seems no reason to doubt that it is a tolerably accurate picture of his mode of living from the time of his ordination, to his death.

So little is known of the particular events of the last fifteen years of Toplady's life, that it is impossible to do more than give a general sketch of his proceedings. He seems to have attained a high reputation at a very early date, as a thoroughgoing supporter of Calvinistic opinions—and a leading opponent of Arminianism. His correspondence shows that he was on intimate terms with Lady Huntingdon, Whitefield, Romaine, Berridge, John Gill, Ambrose Serle, and other eminent Christians of those times. But how and when he formed acquaintance with them—we have no information. His pen was constantly employed in defense of evangelical religion, from 1768.

His early habits of study, were kept up with unabated diligence. No man among the spiritual heroes of last century, seems to have read more than he did, or to have had a more extensive knowledge of divinity. His bitterest adversaries in controversy could never deny that he was a scholar, and a ripe one. Indeed, it admits of grave question whether he did not shorten his life by his habits of *constant study*. He says himself, in a letter to a relative, dated March 19,1775, "Though I cannot entirely agree with you in supposing that extreme study has been the cause of my late illness, I must yet confess that the *hill of learning*, like that of *virtue*, is in some instances climbed with labor. But when we get a little way up, the lovely prospects which open to the eye, make infinite amends for the steepness of the ascent. In short, I am wedded to these pursuits, as a man stipulates to take his wife; namely, for better—for worse—until death do us part. My thirst for knowledge is literally inextinguishable. And if I thus drink myself into a superior world—I cannot help it."

One feature in Toplady's character, I may here remark. can hardly fail to strike an attentive reader of his remains. That feature is the *eminent spirituality of the tone of his religion*. There can be no greater mistake than to regard him as a mere student and deep reader, or as a hard and dry controversial divine. Such an estimate of him is thoroughly unjust! His letters and remains supply abundant evidence that he was one who lived in very close communion with God, and had very deep experience of divine things. Living much alone, seldom going into society, and possessing few friends—he was a man little understood by many, who only knew him by his controversial writings, and specially by his unflinching advocacy of Calvinism. Yet really, if the truth be spoken, I hardly find any man of the last century who seems to have soared so high and aimed so loftily, in his personal dealings with his Savior—as Toplady.

There is an unction and savor about some of his remains, which few of his contemporaries equaled, and none surpassed. I grant freely that he left behind him many things which cannot be much commended. But lie left behind him some things which will live, as long as English is spoken, in the hearts of all true Christians. His writings contain "thoughts which breathe and words which burn," as any writings of his age. And it never ought to be forgotten, that the man who penned them, was lying in his grave before he was thirty-nine!

The last three years of Toplady's life were spent in London. He removed there by medical advice in the year 1775, under the idea that the moist air of his previous pastorate was injurious to his health. Whether the advice was sound or not may now, perhaps, admit of question. At any rate, the change of climate did him no good. Little by little, the insidious disease of the chest, under which he labored, made progress, and wasted his strength. He was certainly able to preach at Orange Street Chapel in the years 1776 and 1777; but it is equally certain that throughout this period he was gradually drawing near to his end.

He was never, perhaps, more thoroughly appreciated, than he was during these last three years of his ministry. A picked London congregation, such as he had, was able to value gifts and powers, which were completely thrown away on a rural parish in Devonshire. His stores of theological reading and distinct doctrinal statement were rightly appraised by his metropolitan hearers. In short, if he had lived longer he might, humanly speaking, have done a mighty work in London. But He who holds the stars in his right hand, and knows best what is good for his Church—saw fit to withdraw him soon from his new sphere of usefulness. He seemed as if he came to London only to be known and highly valued—and then to die.

The closing scene of the good man's life was singularly beautiful, and at the same time singularly characteristic. He died as he had lived, in the full hope and peace of the gospel, and with an unwavering confidence in the truth of the doctrines which he had for fifteen years advocated both with his tongue and with his pen. About two months before his death he was greatly pained by hearing that he was reported to have receded from his Calvinistic opinions, and to have expressed a desire to recant them in the presence of Mr. John Wesley. So much was he moved by this rumor, that he resolved to appear before his congregation once more, and to give a public denial to it before he died. His physician in vain remonstrated with him. He was told that it would be dangerous to make the attempt, and that he might probably die in the pulpit. But Toplady was not a man to be influenced by such considerations. He replied that "he would rather die in the harness—than die in the stall." He actually carried his resolution into effect. On Sunday, June the 14th, in the last stage of consumption, and only two months before he died, he ascended his pulpit in Orange Street Chapel, after his assistant had preached, to the astonishment of his people, and gave a short but affecting exhortation founded on 2 Pet. 1:13, 14: "I think it fit, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance." He then closed his address with the following remarkable declaration:

"It having been industriously circulated by some malicious and unprincipled people, that during my present long and severe illness I expressed a strong desire of seeing Mr. John Wesley before I die, and revoking some particulars relative to him which occur in my writings. Now I do publicly and most solemnly aver—that I have not nor ever had any such intention or desire; and that I most sincerely hope my last hours will be much better employed than in communing with such a man. So certain and so satisfied am I of the truth of all that I have ever written, that were I now sitting up in my dying bed with a pen and ink in my hand, and all the religious and controversial writings I ever published, especially those relating to Mr. John Wesley and the Arminian controversy, whether respecting fact or doctrine, could be at once displayed to my view—I should not strike out a single line relative to him or them!"

The last days of Toplady's life were spent in great peace. He went down the *valley of the shadow of death* with abounding consolations, and was enabled to say many edifying things to all around him. The following recollections, jotted down by friends who ministered to him, and communicated to his biographer, can hardly fail to be interesting to a Christian reader.

One friend observes: "A remarkable jealousy was apparent in his whole conduct as he drew near his end, for fear of receiving any part of that honor which is due to Christ alone. He desired to be nothing, and that Jesus might be all and in all. His feelings were so very tender upon this subject, that I once undesignedly put him almost in an agony, by remarking the great loss which the Church of Christ would sustain by his death at this particular juncture. The utmost distress was immediately visible in his countenance, and he exclaimed, 'What! by my death? No, no! Jesus Christ is able, and will, by proper instruments, defend his own truths. And with regard

to what little I have been enabled to do in this way, not to me, not to me—but to his own name, and to that only, be the glory.'

"The more his bodily strength was impaired the more vigorous, lively, and rejoicing his mind seemed to be. From the whole turn of his conversation during our interview, he appeared not merely placid and serene—but he evidently possessed the fullest assurance of the most triumphant faith. He repeatedly told me that he had not had the least shadow of a doubt respecting his eternal salvation for near two years past. It is no wonder, therefore, that he so earnestly longed to be dissolved and to be with Christ. His soul seemed to be constantly panting heavenward, and his desire increased the nearer his dissolution approached. A short time before his death, at his request, I felt his pulse, and he desired to know what I thought of it. I told him that his heart and arteries evidently beat almost every day weaker and weaker. He replied immediately, with the sweetest smile on his countenance, 'Why, that is a good sign that my death is fast approaching; and, blessed be God, I can add that my heart beats every day stronger and stronger for glory.'

"A few days before his dissolution I found him sitting up in his arm-chair—but scarcely able to move or speak. I addressed him very softly, and asked if his consolations continued to abound as they had hitherto done. He quickly replied, 'O my dear sir, it is impossible to describe how good God is to me. Since I have been sitting in this chair this afternoon I have enjoyed such a season, such sweet communion with God, and such delightful manifestation of his presence with and love to my soul, that it is impossible for words or any language to express them. I have had peace and joy unutterable, and I fear not but that God's consolation and support will continue.' But he immediately recollected himself, and added, 'What have I said? God may, to be sure, as a sovereign, hide his face and his smiles from me; however, I believe he will not; and if he should, yet will I trust him. I know I am safe and secure, for his love and his covenant are everlasting!'"

To another friend, speaking about his dying avowal in the pulpit of his church in Orange Street, he said: "My dear friend, these great and glorious truths which the Lord in rich mercy has given me to believe, and which he has enabled me (though very feebly) to defend, are not, as those who oppose them say, *dry doctrines* or *mere speculative points*. No! being brought into practical and heartfelt experience, they are the very joy and support of my soul; and the consolations flowing from them carry me far above the things of time and sense. So far as I know my own heart, I have no desire but to be entirely passive, to live, to die, to be, to do, to suffer whatever is God's blessed will concerning me, being perfectly satisfied that as he ever has, so he ever will do that which is best concerning me, and that he deals out in number, weight, and measure, whatever will conduce most to his own glory and to the good of his people."

Another of his friends mentioning the report that was spread abroad of his recanting his former principles, he said with some vehemence and emotion, "I recant my former principles! God forbid that I should be so vile an apostate!" To which he presently added, with great apparent humility, "And yet that apostate I would soon be—if I were left to myself!"

Within an hour of his death, he called his friends and his servant to him, and asked them if they could give him up. Upon their answering that they could, since it pleased the Lord to be so gracious to him, he replied: "Oh, what a blessing it is that you are made willing to give me up into the hands of my dear Redeemer, and to part with me! It will not be long before God takes me; for no mortal man can live, after the glories which God has manifested to my soul." Soon after this he closed his eyes, and quietly fell asleep in Christ on Tuesday, August 11, 1778, in the thirty-eighth year of his age.

He was buried in Tottenham Court Chapel, under the gallery, opposite the pulpit, in the presence of thousands of people, who came together from all parts of London to do him honor. His high reputation as a champion of truth, the unjust misrepresentations circulated about his change of opinion, his effectiveness as a preacher, and his comparative youthfulness, combined to draw forth a more than ordinary expression of sympathy. "Devout men carried him to his burial, and made great lamentation over him." Foremost among the mourners was one at that time young in the ministry, who lived long enough to be a connecting link between the last century and the present—the well-known and eccentric Rowland Hill. Before the burial-service commenced, he could not refrain from transgressing one of Toplady's last requests, that no funeral-sermon should be preached for him, and affectionately declared to the vast assembly the love and veneration he felt for the deceased, and the high sense he entertained of his graces, gifts, and usefulness. And thus, amidst the tears and thanksgivings of true-hearted mourners, the much-abused pastor was gathered to his people.

The following passage from Toplady's last will, made and signed six months before his decease, is so remarkable and characteristic, that I cannot refrain from giving it to my readers: "I most humbly commit my soul to Almighty God, whom I honor, and have long experienced to be my ever gracious and infinitely merciful Father. Nor have I the least doubt of my election, justification, and eternal happiness, through the riches of his everlasting and unchangeable kindness to me in Christ Jesus, his co-equal Son, my only, my assured, and my all-sufficient Savior; washed in whose propitiatory blood, and clothed with whose imputed righteousness, I trust to stand perfect, sinless, and complete; and do truly believe that I most certainly shall so stand, in the hour of death, and in the kingdom of heaven, and at the last judgment, and in the ultimate state of endless glory. Neither can I write this my last will without rendering the deepest, the most solemn, and the most ardent thanks to the adorable Trinity in Unity, for their eternal, unmerited, irreversible, and inexhaustible love to me a sinner. I bless God the Father for having written from everlasting my unworthy name in the book of life—even for appointing me to obtain salvation through Jesus Christ my Lord. I adore God the Son for having vouchsafed to redeem me by his own most precious death, and for having obeyed the whole law for my justification. I admire and revere the gracious benignity of God the Holy Spirit, who converted me to the saving knowledge of Christ more than twenty-two years ago, and whose enlightening, supporting, comforting, and sanctifying agency is, and (I doubt not) will be my strength and song in the hours of my earthly pilgrimage."

Having now traced Toplady's history from his cradle to his grave, it only remains for me to offer some general estimate of his worth and attainments. To do this, I frankly confess, is no easy task. Not only is his biography a miserably deficient one—this alone is bad enough—but his literary remains have been edited in such a slovenly, careless, ignorant manner, without order or arrangement, that they do not fairly represent the author's merits. Certainly the reputation of great writers and ministers may suffer sadly from the treatment of injudicious friends. If ever there was a man who fell into the hands of the Philistines after his death, that man, so far as I can judge, was Augustus Toplady. I shall do the best I can with the materials at my disposal; but I trust my readers will remember that they are exceedingly scanty.

1. As a preacher, I should be disposed to assign to Toplady a very high place among the second-class men of the last century. His constitutional delicacy and weakness of lungs, in all probability, made it impossible for him to do the things that Whitefield and

Berridge did. Constant open-air addresses, impassioned extempore appeals to thousands of hearers, were a style of thing entirely out of his line. Yet there is pretty good evidence that he had no mean reputation as a pulpit orator, and possessed no mean powers. The mere fact that Lady Huntingdon occasionally selected him to preach in her chapels at Bath and Brighton, of itself speaks volumes. The additional fact that at one of the great Methodist gatherings at Trevecca he was put forward as one of the leading preachers, is enough to show that his sermons possessed high merit. The following notes about preaching, which he records in his diary, as having received them from an old friend, will probably throw much light on the general turn of his ministrations:

(1.) Preach Christ crucified, and dwell chiefly on the blessings resulting from his righteousness, atonement, and intercession.

(2.) Avoid all needless controversies in the pulpit; except it be when your subject necessarily requires it, or when the truths of God are likely to suffer by your silence.

(3.) When you ascend the pulpit, leave your learning behind you; endeavor to preach more to the *hearts* of your people than to their *heads*.

(4.) Do not affect much oratory. Seek rather to *profit* than to be *admired*.

Specimens of Toplady's ordinary preaching are unfortunately very rare. There are but ten sermons in the collection of his works, and out of these, the great majority were preached on special occasions, and cannot, therefore, be regarded as fair samples of his pulpit work. In all of them there is a certain absence of fire, animation, and directness. But in all there is abundance of excellent matter, and a quiet, decided, knockdown, sledge-hammer style of putting things which, I can well believe, would be extremely effective, and especially with educated congregations. The three following extracts may perhaps give some idea of what Toplady was in the pulpit of Orange Street Chapel. Of his ministry in Broad Hembury, I suspect we know next to nothing at all.

The first extract forms the conclusion of a sermon preached in 1774 at the Lock Chapel, entitled "Good News from Heaven." "I perceive the elements are upon the sacramental table. And I doubt not many of you mean to present yourselves at that throne of grace which God has mercifully erected through the righteousness and sufferings of his co-equal Son. Oh, beware of coming with one sentiment on your lips and another in your hearts! Take heed of saying with your mouths, 'We do not come to this your table, O Lord, trusting in our own righteousness,' while perhaps you have in reality some secret reserves in favor of that very self-righteousness which you profess to renounce, and are thinking that Christ's merits alone will not save you unless you add something or other to make it effectual. Oh, be not so deceived! God will not thus be mocked, nor will Christ thus be insulted with impunity. Call your works what you will—whether terms, causes, conditions, or supplements—the matter comes to the same point, and Christ is equally thrust out of his mediatorial throne by these or any similar views of human obedience. If you do not wholly depend on Jesus as the Lord your righteousness—if you mix your faith in him with anything else—if the finished work of the crucified God is not alone your acknowledged anchor and foundation of acceptance with the Father, both here and ever—come to his table and receive the symbols of his body and blood at your peril! Leave your own righteousness behind you, or you have no business here. You are without the wedding garment, and God will say to you, 'Friend, how came you here?' If you go on, moreover, to live and die in this state of unbelief, you will be found speechless and excuseless in the day of judgment; and the slighted Savior will say to his angels concerning you, 'Bind him hand and foot, and cast him into outer darkness, ... for many are called—but few are chosen."

My second extract is from a sermon on "Free Will," preached at St. Anne's, Blackfriars, in 1774: "I know it is growing very fashionable to talk against spiritual feelings. But I dare not join the cry. On the contrary, I adopt the apostle's prayer that our love to God and the manifestation of his love to us—may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all feeling. And it is no enthusiastic wish in behalf of you and myself, that we may be of the number of those godly persons who, as our Church justly expresses it, 'feel in themselves the workings of the Spirit of Christ, mortifying the works of the flesh, and drawing up their minds to high and heavenly things.' Indeed, the great business of God's Spirit is to draw up and to bring down—to draw up our affections to Christ, and to bring down the unsearchable riches of grace into our hearts. The knowledge of this, and earnest desire for it, are all the feelings I plead for; and for these feelings I wish ever to plead, satisfied as I am, that without some experience and enjoyment of them, we cannot be happy living or dying.

"Let me ask you, as it were one by one—has the Holy Spirit begun to reveal these deep things of God in your soul? If so, give him the glory of it. And as you prize communion with him, as ever you value the comforts of the Holy Spirit, endeavor to be found in God's way, even the highway of *humble faith* and *obedient love*, sitting at the feet of Christ, and imbibing those sweet sanctifying communications of grace which are at once a pledge of, and a preparation for, complete heaven when you die. God forbid that we should ever think lightly of religious feelings. If we do not in some measure feel ourselves to be sinners, and feel that Christ is precious, I doubt the Spirit of God has never been savingly at work upon our souls."

My last extract shall be from a sermon preached at St. Anne's, Blackfriars (Romaine's church, be it remembered), in 1770, entitled, "A Caveat against Unsound Doctrine." "Faith is the eye of the soul, and the eye is said to see almost every object but itself; so that you may have real faith without being able to discern it. God will not despise the day of small things. Little faith goes to heaven no less than great faith; though not so comfortably, yet altogether as surely. If you come merely as a sinner to Jesus, and throw yourself, at all events, for salvation on his alone blood and righteousness, and the grace and promise of God in him, you are as truly a believer as the most triumphant saint who ever lived. Amidst all your weakness, distresses, and temptations, remember that God will not cast out nor cast off the lowest and unworthiest soul that seeks salvation only in the name of Jesus Christ the righteous. When you cannot follow the Rock, the Rock shall follow you, nor ever leave you for a single moment on this side the heavenly Canaan. If you feel your absolute need of Christ, you may on all occasions and in every exigence, betake yourself to the covenant-love and faithfulness of God for pardon, sanctification, and safety, and with the same fullness of right and title as a traveler leans upon his own staff, or as a weary laborer throws himself upon his own bed, or as an opulent nobleman draws upon his own banker for whatever sum he wants."

I make no comment on these extracts. They speak for themselves. Most Christians, I suspect, will agree with me, that the man who could speak to congregations in this fashion was no ordinary preacher. The hearers of such sermons could never say, "The hungry sheep look up, and are not fed." I am bold to say, that the Church of the nineteenth century would be in a far more healthy condition if it had more preaching like Toplady's.

2. As a writer of miscellaneous papers on religious subjects, I do not think Toplady has ever been duly appreciated. His pen seems to have been never idle, and his collected works contain a large number of short useful essays on a great variety of subjects. Any one who takes the trouble to peruse them, will be surprised to find that the worthy pastor was conversant with many things beside the Calvinistic controversy, and could write about them in a very interesting manner. He will find short and well-written biographies of Bishop Jewell, Bishop Carleton, Bishop Wilson, John Knox, Fox the Martyrologist, Lord Harrington, Witsius, Allsop, and Dr. Watts. He will find a very valuable collection of extracts from the works of eminent Christians, and of anecdotes, incidents, and historical passages, gathered by Toplady himself. He will find a sketch of natural history, and some curious observations on birds, meteors, animal sagacity, and the solar system. These papers, no doubt, are of various merit; but they all show the singular activity and fertility of the author's mind, and are certainly far more deserving of republication than many of the reprints of modern days.

Of Toplady's "Family Prayers" I shall say nothing. They are probably so well known that I need not commend them. Of his seventy-eight letters to friends, I will only say that they are excellent specimens of the correspondence of the last century—sensible, well composed, full of thought and matter, and supplying abundant proof that their writer was a Christian, a scholar, and a gentleman. I cannot, however, do more than refer to all these productions of Toplady's pen. Those who wish to know more must examine his works for themselves. If they do, I venture to predict that they will agree with me that his miscellaneous writings are neither sufficiently known nor valued.

3. As a controversialist, I find it rather difficult to give a right estimate of Toplady. In fact, the subject is a painful one, and one which I would gladly avoid. But I feel that I should not be dealing fairly and honestly with my readers, if I did not say something about it. In fact, Toplady took such a very prominent part in the doctrinal controversies of last century, and was so thoroughly recognized as the champion and standard-bearer of Calvinistic theology, that no memoir of him could be regarded as complete, which did not take up this part of his character.

I begin by saying that, on the whole, Toplady's controversial writings appear to me to be in principle— scriptural, sound, and true. I do not, for a moment, mean that I can endorse all he says. I consider that his statements are often extreme, and that *he is frequently more systematic and narrow than the Bible*. He often seems to me, in fact, to go *further* than Scripture, and to draw conclusions which Scripture has not drawn, and to settle points which for some wise reason Scripture has not settled. Still, for all this, I will never shrink from saying that the cause for which Toplady contended all his life, was decidedly the cause of God's truth. He was a bold defender of Calvinistic views about election, predestination, perseverance, human impotency, and irresistible grace. On all these subjects I hold firmly that Calvin's theology is much more scriptural than the theology of Arminius. In a word, *I believe that Calvinistic divinity is the divinity of the Bible*. While, therefore, I repeat that I cannot endorse all the sentiments of Toplady's controversial writings, I do claim for them the merit of being in principle scriptural, sound, and true. Well would it be for the Churches, if we had a good deal more of clear, distinct, sharply-cut doctrine in the present day! Vagueness and indistinctness are marks of our degenerate condition.

But I go further than this. I do not hesitate to say that Toplady's controversial works display extraordinary ability. For example, his "Historic Proof of the Doctrinal Calvinism of the Church of England" is a treatise that displays a prodigious amount of research and reading. It is a book that no one could have written who had not studied much, thought much, and thoroughly investigated an enormous mass of theological literature. You see at once that the author has completely digested what he has read, and is able to concentrate all his reading on every point which he handles. The best proof of the book's ability is the simple fact that down to the present day it has never been really answered. It has been reviled, sneered at, abused, and held up to scorn. But abuse is not argument. *The book remains to this hour unanswered, and that for the simplest of all reasons—that it is unanswerable*. It proves undeniably, whether men like it or not, that Calvinism is the doctrine of the Church of England, and that all her leading divines, until Laud's time, were Calvinists. All this is done logically, clearly, and powerfully. No one, I venture to think, could read the book through, and not feel obliged to admit that, the author was an able man.

While, however, I claim for Toplady's controversial writings the merit of *soundness* and *ability*, I must with sorrow admit that I cannot praise his *spirit* and *language* when speaking of his opponents. I am obliged to confess that he often uses expressions about them so violent and so bitter, that one feels perfectly ashamed. Never, I regret to say, did an advocate of truth appear to me so entirely to forget the text, "In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves," as did Toplady. Arminianism seems to have precisely the same effect on him—that a scarlet cloak has on a bull. He appears to think it impossible that an Arminian can be saved, and never shrinks with classing *Arminians* with Pelagians, Socinians, Papists, and heretics. He says things about Wesley which never ought to have been said. All this is melancholy work indeed! But those who are familiar with Toplady's controversial writings, know well that I am stating simple truths.

I will not stain my paper nor waste my readers' time by supplying proofs of Toplady's controversial bitterness. It would be very unprofitable to do so. The epithets he applies to his adversaries are perfectly amazing and astonishing. It must in fairness be remembered that the language of his *opponents* was exceedingly violent, and was enough to provoke any man. It must not be forgotten, moreover, that a hundred years ago men said things in controversy that were not considered so bad as they are now, from the different standard of taste that prevailed. Men were perhaps more honest and outspoken than they are now, and their bark was worse than their bite. But all these considerations only palliate the case. The fact remains, that as a controversialist, Toplady was extremely bitter and intemperate, and caused his good to be evil spoken of. He carried the principle, "Rebuke them sharply—that they may be sound in the faith," to an absurd extreme. He forgot the example of his Master, who "when he was reviled—reviled not again;" and he entirely marred the value of his arguments by the violence and uncharitableness with which he maintained them. Thousands who neither cared nor understood anything about his favorite cause, could understand that no cause ought to be defended in such a spirit and temper.

I leave this painful subject with the general remark, that Toplady is a standing beacon to the Church, to show us the *evils of controversy*. "The beginning of strife is like letting out water." "In the multitude of words, there lacks not sin." We must never shrink from controversy, if need be, in defense of Christ's gospel—but we must never take it up without jealous watchfulness over our own hearts, and over the manner in which we carry it on. Above all, we must strive to think as charitably as possible of our opponent. It was Calvin himself who said of Luther, "He may call me a devil if he will; but I shall always call him a good servant of Jesus Christ." Well would it have been for Toplady's reputation, if he had been more like Calvin! Perhaps when we open our eyes in heaven—we

shall be amazed to find how many things there were which both Calvinists and Arminians did not thoroughly understand.

4. There is only one point about Toplady on which I wish to say something, and that is his character as a *hymn-writer*. This is a point, I am thankful to say, on which I find no difficulty at all. I give it as my decided opinion that he was one of the best hymn-writers in the English language. I am quite aware that this may seem extravagant praise; but I speak deliberately. I hold that *there are no hymns better than his*.

Good *hymns* are an immense blessing to the Church of Christ. I believe the last day alone will show the world the real amount of good they have done. They suit all, both rich and poor. There is an elevating, stirring, soothing, spiritualizing, effect about a thoroughly good hymn, which nothing else can produce. It sticks in men's memories when texts are forgotten. It trains men for heaven, where praise is one of the principal occupations. *Preaching* and *praying* shall one day cease forever; but *praise* shall never die. The makers of good ballads are said to sway national opinion. The writers of good hymns, in like manner, are those who leave the deepest marks on the face of the Church. Thousands of people rejoice in the "Rock of Ages," and "Just as I am," who know little of Scripture or sound doctrine.

But really good hymns are exceedingly rare. There are only a few men in any age who can write them. You may name hundreds of first-rate preachers—for one first-rate writer of hymns. Hundreds of so-called hymns fill up our collections of congregational psalmody, which are really not hymns at all. They are very sound, very scriptural, very proper, very correct, very tolerably rhymed; but they are not real, live, genuine hymns. There is no *life* about them. At best they are tame, pointless, weak, and watery. In many cases, if written out straight, without respect of lines, they would make excellent prose. But poetry they are not. It may be a startling assertion to some ears—to say that there are not more than two hundred first-rate hymns in the English language; but startling as it may sound, I believe it is true.

Of all English hymn-writers, none, perhaps, have succeeded so thoroughly in combining truth, poetry, life, warmth, fire, depth, solemnity, and unction—as Toplady has. I pity the man who does not know, or, knowing, does not admire those glorious hymns of his beginning, "Rock of Ages, cleft for me;" or, "Holy Spirit, dispel our sadness;" or, "A debtor to mercy alone;" or, "Your harps, you trembling saints;" or, "Christ, whose glory fills the skies;" or, "When languor and disease invade;" or, "Deathless principle, arise." The writer of these seven hymns alone, has laid the Church under perpetual obligations to him. Heretics have been heard whispering over "Rock of Ages," as if they clung to it when they had let slip all things beside. Great statesmen have been known to turn it into Latin, as if to perpetuate its fame. The only matter of regret is, that the writer of such excellent hymns should have written so few. If he had lived longer, written more hymns, and handled fewer controversies, his memory would have been had in greater honor, and men would have been better pleased.

That hymns of such singular beauty and pathos should have come from the same pen which indicted such bitter controversial writings, is certainly a strange anomaly. I do not pretend to explain it, or to offer any solution. I only lay it before my readers as a naked fact. To say the least, it should teach us not to be hasty in censuring a man—before we know all sides of his character. *The best saints of God are neither so very good—nor the faultiest so very faulty—as they appear*. He who only reads Toplady's hymns will find it hard to believe that he could compose his controversial writings. He who only reads his controversial writings will hardly believe that he composed his hymns. Yet the fact remains, that the same man composed both. **Alas! the holiest among us all is a very poor mixed creature!**

I now leave the subject of this chapter here. I ask my readers to put a favorable construction on Toplady's life, and to judge him with righteous judgment. I fear he is a man who has never been fairly estimated, and has never had many friends. Ministers of his decided, sharply-cut, doctrinal opinions—are never very popular. But I plead strongly that Toplady's undeniable faults should never make us forget his equally undeniable excellencies. With all his infirmities, I firmly believe that he was a godly man and a great man, and did a work for Christ a hundred years ago, which will never be overthrown. He will stand in his lot at the last day in a high place, when many, perhaps, whom the world liked better—shall be put to shame!

CHRIST IS ALL

by

J. C. Ryle
(1816-1900)

"Christ is all."-COLOSSIANS iii. 11.

THE words of the text which heads this page are few, short, and soon spoken; but they contain great things. Like those golden sayings: "To me to live is Christ,"-"I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me,"-they are singularly rich and suggestive. (Phil. i. 21; Gal. ii. 20.)

These three words are the essence and substance of Christianity. If our hearts can really go along with them, it is well with our souls; if not, we may be sure we have yet much to learn.

Christ is the mainspring both of doctrinal and practical Christianity. A right knowledge of Christ is essential to a right knowledge of sanctification as well as justification. He that follows after holiness will make no progress unless he gives to Christ His rightful place.

Let me try to set before my readers in what sense "Christ is all;" and let me ask them, as they read, to judge themselves honestly, that they may not make shipwreck in the judgment of the last day.

I. First of all let us understand that *Christ is all, in all the counsels of God concerning man*.

(a) There was a time when this earth had no being. Solid as the mountains look, boundless as the sea appears, high as the stars in heaven look,-they once did not exist. And man, with all the high thoughts he now has of himself, was a creature unknown.

And where was Christ then?

Even then Christ was "with God, was God, and was equal with God." (John i. 1; Phil. ii. 6) Even then He was the beloved Son of the Father: "Thou lovedst Me," He says, "before the foundation of the world."-"I had glory with Thee before the world began."-"I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was." (John xvii. 5, 24; Prov. viii. 23.) Even then He was the Saviour "for ordained before the foundation of the world" (1 Peter i. 20), and believers were "chosen in Him." (Ephes. i. 4.)

(b) There came a time when this earth was created in its present order. Sun, moon, and stars,-sea, land, and all their inhabitants, were called into being, and made out of chaos and confusion. And, last of all, man was formed out of the dust of the ground.

And where was Christ then?

Hear what the Scripture says: "All things were made by Him, and without Him was not any thing made that was made." (John i. 3.) "By Him were all things created, that are in heaven and that are in earth." (Colos. i. 16.) "And Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of Thine hands." (Heb. i. 10.) "When He prepared the heavens, I was there: when He set a compass upon the face of the depth: when He established the clouds above: when He strengthened the foundations of the deep: when He gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass His commandment: when He appointed the foundations of the earth: then I was by Him, as one brought up with Him." (Prov. viii. 27-30.) Can we wonder that the Lord Jesus, in His preaching, should continually draw lessons from the book of nature? When He spoke of the sheep, the fish, the ravens, the corn, the lilies, the fig-tree, the vine,-He spoke of things which He Himself had made.

(c) There came a day when sin entered the world.-Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, and fell. They lost that holy nature in which they were first formed. They forfeited the friendship and favour of God, and became guilty, corrupt, helpless, hopeless sinners. Sin came as a barrier between themselves and their holy Father in heaven. Had He dealt with them according to their deserts, there had been nothing before them but death, hell, and everlasting ruin.

And where was Christ then?

In that very day He was revealed to our trembling parents, as the only hope of salvation. The very day they fell, they were told that "the seed of the woman should yet bruise the serpent's head,"-that a Saviour born of a woman should overcome the devil, and win for sinful man an entrance to eternal life. (Gen. iii. 15.) Christ was held up as the true light of the world, in the very day of the fall; and never has any name been made known from that day by which souls could be saved, excepting His. By Him all saved souls have entered heaven, from Adam downward; and without Him none have ever escaped hell.

(d) There came a time when the world seemed sunk and buried in ignorance of God. After 4,000 years the nations of the earth appeared to have clean forgotten the God that made them. Egyptian, Assyrian, Persian, Grecian, and Roman empires, had done nothing but spread superstition and idolatry. Poets, historians, philosophers, had proved that, with all their intellectual powers, they had no right knowledge of God; and that man, left to himself, was utterly corrupt. "The world, by wisdom, knew not God." (1 Cor. i. 21.) Excepting a few despised Jews in a corner of the earth, the whole world was dead in ignorance and sin.

And what did Christ do then?

He left the glory He had had from all eternity wits the Father, and came down into the world to provide a salvation. He took our nature upon Him, and was born as a man. As a man He did the will of God perfectly, which we all had left undone: as a man He suffered on the cross the wrath of God which we ought to have suffered. He brought in everlasting righteousness for us. He redeemed us from the curse of a broken law. He opened a fountain for all sin and uncleanness. He died for our sins. He rose again for our justification. He ascended to God's right hand, and there sat down, waiting till His enemies should be made His footstool. And there He sits now, offering salvation to all who will come to Him, interceding for all who believe in Him, and managing by God's appointment all that concerns the salvation of souls.

(e) There is a time coming when sin shall be cast out from this world.-Wickedness shall not always flourish unpunished,-Satan shall not always reign,-creation shall not always groan, being burdened. There shall be a time of restitution of all things. There shall be a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, and the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. (Rom. viii. 22; Acts iii. 21; 2 Pet. iii. 13; Isai. xi. 9.)

And where shall Christ be then? And what shall He do?

Christ Himself shall be King. He shall return to this earth, and make all things new. He shall come in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory, and the kingdoms of the world shall become His. The heathen shall be given to Him for His inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession. To Him every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess that He is Lord. His dominion shall be an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed. (Matt. xxiv. 30; Rev. xi. 15; Ps. ii. 8; Phil. ii. 10, 11; Dan. vii. 14.)

(f) There is a day coming when all men shall be judged. The sea shall give up the dead which are in it, and death and hell shall deliver up the dead which are in them. All that sleep in the grave shall awake and come forth, and all shall be judged according to their works. (Rev. xx. 13; Dan. xii. 2.)

And where will Christ be then?

Christ Himself will be the Judge. "The Father hath committed all judgment unto the Son."-"When the Son of man shall come in His glory, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory:-and before Him shall be gathered all nations: and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats."-"We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ: that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." (John v. 22. Matt. xxv. 32. 2

Cor. v. 10.)

Now if any reader of this paper thinks little of Christ, let him know this day that he is very unlike God! You are of one mind, and God is of another. You are of one judgment, and God is of another. You think it enough to give Christ a *little* honour,-a *little* reverence,-a *little* respect. But in all the eternal counsels of God the Father, in creation, redemption, restitution, and judgment,-in all these, Christ is "all."

Surely we shall do well to consider these things. Surely it is not written in vain, "He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which hath sent Him." (John v. 23.)

II. In the second place, let us understand that *"Christ is all" in the inspired books which make up the Bible.*

In every part of both Testaments Christ is to be found,-dimly and indistinctly at the beginning,-more clearly and plainly in the middle,-fully and completely at the end,-but really and substantially everywhere.

Christ's sacrifice and death for sinners, and Christ's kingdom and future glory, are the light we must bring to bear on any book of Scripture we read. Christ's cross and Christ's crown are the clue we must hold fast, if we would find our way through Scripture difficulties. Christ is the only key that will unlock many of the dark places of the Word. Some people complain that they do not understand the Bible. And the reason is very simple. They do not use the key. To them the Bible is like the hieroglyphics in Egypt. It is a mystery, just because they do not use the key.

It was Christ crucified who was set forth in every Old Testament sacrifice. Every animal slain and offered on an altar, was a practical confession that a Saviour was looked for who would die for sinners,-a Saviour who should take away man's sin, by suffering, as his Substitute and Sin-bearer, in his stead. (1 Peter iii. 18.) It is absurd to suppose that an unmeaning slaughter of innocent beasts, without a distinct object in view, could please the eternal God!

It was Christ to whom Abel looked when he offered a better sacrifice than Cain. Not only was the heart of Abel better than that of his brother, but he showed his knowledge of vicarious sacrifice and his faith in an atonement. He offered the firstlings of his flock, with the blood thereof, and in so doing declared his belief that without shedding of blood there is no remission. (Heb. xi. 4.)

It was Christ of whom Enoch prophesied in the days of abounding wickedness before the flood.-"Behold," he said, "the Lord cometh with ten thousand of His saints, to execute judgment upon all." (Jude 15.)

It was Christ to whom Abraham looked when he dwelt in tents in the land of promise. He believed that in his seed,-in one born of his family,-all the nations of the earth should be blessed.. By faith he saw Christ's day, and was glad. (John viii. 56.)

It was Christ of whom Jacob spoke to his sons, as he lay dying. He marked out the tribe out of which He would be born, and foretold that "gathering together" unto Him which is yet to be accomplished. "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor the law-giver from between his feet, until Shiloh come, and unto Him shall the gathering of the people be." (Gen. xlix. 10.)

It was Christ who was the substance of the ceremonial law which God gave to Israel by the hand of Moses. The morning and evening sacrifice,-the continual shedding of blood,-the altar,-the mercy seat,-the high priest,-the passover,-the day of atonement,-the scape-goat:-all these were so many pictures, types, and emblems of Christ and His work. God had compassion upon the weakness of His people. He taught them "Christ" line upon line, and, as we teach little children, by similitudes. It was in this sense especially that "the law was a schoolmaster to lead" the Jews "unto Christ." (Gal. iii. 24.)

It was Christ to whom God directed the attention of Israel by all the daily miracles which were done before their eyes in the wilderness. The pillar of cloud and fire which guided them,-the manna from heaven which every morning fed them,-the water from the smitten rock which followed them,-all and each were figures of Christ. The brazen serpent, on that memorable occasion when the plague of fiery serpents was sent upon them, was an emblem of Christ. (1 Cor. x. 4; John iii. 14.)

It was Christ of whom all the Judges were types. Joshua, and David, and Gideon, and Jephthah, and Samson, and all the rest whom God raised up to deliver Israel from captivity,-all were emblems of Christ. Weak and unstable and faulty as some of them were, they were set for examples of better things in the distant future. All were meant to remind the tribes of that far higher Deliverer who was yet to come.

It was Christ of whom David the king was a type. Anointed and chosen when few gave him honour,-despised and rejected by Saul and all the tribes of Israel,-persecuted and obliged to flee for his life,-a man of sorrow all his life, and yet at length a conqueror;-in all these things David represented Christ.

It was Christ of whom all the prophets from Isaiah to Malachi spoke. They saw through a glass darkly. They sometimes dwelt on His sufferings, and some times on His glory that should follow. (1 Peter i. 11.) They did not always mark out for us the distinction between Christ's first coming and Christ's second coming. Like two candles in a straight line, one behind the other, they sometimes saw both the advents at the same time, and spoke of them in one breath. They were sometimes moved by the Holy Ghost to write of the times of Christ crucified, and sometimes of Christ's kingdom in the latter days. But Jesus dying or Jesus reigning, was the thought you will ever find uppermost in their minds.

It is Christ, I need hardly say, of whom the whole New Testament is full. The Gospels are "Christ" living, speaking, and moving among men. The Acts are "Christ" preached, published, and proclaimed. The Epistles are "Christ" written of, explained, and exalted. But all through, from first to last, there is but one Name above every other, and that is Christ.

I charge every reader of this paper to ask himself frequently what the Bible is to him. Is it a Bible in which you have found nothing more than good moral precepts and sound advice? Or is it a Bible in which you have found Christ? Is it a Bible in which "Christ is all" If not, I tell you plainly, you have hitherto used your Bible to very little purpose. You are like a man who studies the solar system, and leaves out in his studies the sun, which is the centre of all. It is no wonder if you find your Bible a dull book!

III. In the third place, let us understand *that "Christ is all" in the religion of all true Christians on earth*.

In saying this, I wish to guard myself against being misunderstood. I hold the absolute necessity of the election of God the Father, and the sanctification of God the Spirit, in order to effect the salvation of every one that is saved. I hold that there is a perfect harmony and unison in the action of the three Persons of the Trinity, in bringing any man to glory, and that all three co-operate and work a joint work in his deliverance from sin and hell. Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Ghost. The Father is merciful, the Son is merciful, the Holy Ghost is merciful. The same Three who said at the beginning, "Let us create," said also, "Let us redeem and save." I hold that every one who reaches heaven will ascribe all the glory of his salvation to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, three Persons in one God.

But, at the same time, I see clear proof in Scripture, that it is the mind of the blessed Trinity that Christ should be prominently and distinctly exalted, in the matter of saving souls. Christ is set forth as the "Word," through whom God's love to sinners is made known. Christ's incarnation and atoning death on the cross, are the great corner-stone on which the whole plan of salvation rests. Christ is the way and door, by which alone approaches to God are to be made. Christ is the root into which all elect sinners must be grafted. Christ is the only meeting-place between God and man, between heaven and earth, between the Holy Trinity and the poor sinful child of Adam. It is Christ whom God the Father has "sealed" and appointed to convey life to a dead. world. (John vi. 27.) It is Christ to whom the Father has given a people to be brought to glory. It is Christ of whom the Spirit testifies, and to whom He always leads a soul for pardon and peace. In short, it has "pleased the Father that in Christ all fulness should dwell." (Coloss. i. 19.) What the sun is in the firmament of heaven, that Christ is in true Christianity.

I say these things by way of explanation. I want my readers clearly to understand, that in saying "Christ is all," I do *not* mean to shut out the work of the Father and of the Spirit. Now let me show what I *do* mean.

(a) Christ is *all in a sinner's justification before God.*

Through Him alone we can have peace with a Holy. God. By Him alone we can have admission into the presence of the Most High, and stand there without fear. "We have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of Him." In Him alone can God be just, and justify the ungodly. (Ephes. iii. 12; Rom. iii. 26.)

Wherewith can any mortal man come before God? What can we bring as a plea for acquittal before that Glorious Being, in whose eyes the very heavens are not clean?

Shall we say that we have done our duty to God? Shall we say that we have done our duty to our neighbour? Shall we bring forward our prayers?-our regularity?-our morality?-our amendments?-our church going? Shall we ask to be accepted because of any of these?

Which of these things will stand the searching inspection of God's eye? Which of them will actually justify us? Which of them will carry us clear through judgment, and land us safe in glory?

None, none, none! Take any commandment of the ten, and let us examine ourselves by it. We have broken it repeatedly. We cannot answer God one of a thousand.-Take any of us, and look narrowly into our ways,-and we are nothing but sinners. There is but one verdict: we are all guilty,-all deserve hell,-all ought to die. Wherewith can we come before God?

We must come in the name of Jesus,-standing on no other ground,-pleading no other plea than this, "Christ died on the cross for the ungodly, and I trust in Him. Christ died for me, and I believe on Him."

The *garment* of our Elder Brother,-the righteousness of Christ,-this is the only robe which can cover us, and enable us to stand in the light of heaven without shame.

The *name* of Jesus is the only name by which we shall obtain an entrance through the gate of eternal glory. If we come to that gate in our own names, we are lost, we shall not be admitted, we shall knock in vain. If we come in the name of Jesus, it is a passport and Shibboleth, and we shall enter and live.

The *mark* of the blood of Christ is the only mark that can save us from destruction. When the angels are separating the children of Adam in the last day, if we are not found marked with that atoning blood, we had better never have been born.

Oh, let us never forget that Christ must be "all" to that soul who would be justified!-We must be content to go to heaven as beggars,-saved by free grace, simply as believers in Jesus,-or we shall never be saved at all.

Is there a thoughtless, worldly soul among the readers of this book? Is there one who thinks to reach heaven by saying hastily at the last, "Lord have mercy on me," without Christ? Friend, you are sowing misery for yourself, and unless you alter, you will awake to endless woe.

Is there a proud, formal soul among the readers of this book? Is there any one thinking to make him self fit for heaven, and good enough to pass muster by his own doings?-Brother, you are building a Babel, and you will never reach heaven in your present state.

But is there a labouring, heavy-laden one among the readers of this book? Is there one who wants to be saved, and feels a vile sinner? I say to such an one, "Come to Christ, and He shall save you. Come to Christ, and cast the burden of your soul on Him. Fear not: only believe."

Do you fear wrath? Christ can deliver you from the wrath to come.-Do you fear the curse of a broken law? Christ can redeem you from the curse of the law.-Do you feel far away? Christ has suffered, to bring you nigh to God.-Do you feel unclean? Christ's blood can cleanse all sin away!-Do you feel imperfect? You shall be complete in Christ.-Do you feel as if you were nothing? Christ shall be "all in all" to your soul.-Never did saint reach heaven with any tale but this, "I was washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb." (Rev. vii. 14.)

(b) But again, Christ is not only all in the justification of a true Christian, but He is also *all in his sanctification*.

I would not have any one misunderstand me. I do not mean for a moment to undervalue the work of the Spirit. But this I say, that no man is ever holy till he comes to Christ and is united to Him. Till then his works are dead works, and he has no holiness at all.-First you must be joined to Christ, and then you shall be holy. "Without Him,-separate from Him,-you can do nothing." (John xv. 5.)

And no man can grow in holiness except he abides in Christ. Christ is the great root from which every believer must draw his strength to go forward. The Spirit is His special gift, His purchased gift for His people. A believer must not only "receive Christ Jesus the Lord," but "walk in Him, and be rooted and built up in Him." (Col. ii. 6, 7.)

Would you be holy? Then Christ is the manna you must daily eat, like Israel in the wilderness of old. Would you be holy? Then Christ must be the rock from which you must daily drink the living water. Would you be holy? Then you must be ever looking unto Jesus,-looking at His cross, and learning fresh motives for a closer walk with God,-looking at His example, and taking Him for your pattern. Looking at Him, you would become like Him. Looking at Him, your face would shine without your knowing it. Look less at yourself and more at Christ, and you will find besetting sins dropping off and leaving you, and your eyes enlightened more and more every day. (Heb. xii. 2; 2 Cor. iii. 18.)

The true secret of coming up out of the wilderness, is to come up "leaning on the Beloved." (Cant. viii. 5.) The true way to be strong is to realize our weakness, and to feel that Christ must be all. The true way to grow in grace, is to make use of Christ as a fountain for every minute's necessities. We ought to employ Him as the prophet's wife employed the oil,-not only to pay our debts, but to live on also. We should strive to be able to say, "The life that I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." (2 Kings iv. 7; Gal. ii. 20.)

I pity those who try to be holy without Christ! Your labour is all in vain. You are putting money in a bag with holes. You are pouring water into a sieve. You are rolling a huge round stone uphill. You are building up a wall with untempered mortar. Believe me, you are beginning at the wrong end. You must come to Christ first, and He shall give you His sanctifying Spirit. You must learn to say with Paul, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." (Phil. iv. 13.)

(c) But again, Christ is not only all in the sanctification of a true Christian, but *all in his comfort in time present.*

A saved soul has many sorrows. He has a body like other men,-weak and frail. He has a heart like other men,-and often a more sensitive one too. He has trials and losses to bear like others,-and often more. He has his share of bereavements, deaths, disappointments, crosses. He has the world to oppose,-a place in life to fill blamelessly,-unconverted relatives to bear with patiently,-persecutions to endure,-and a death to die.

And who is sufficient for these things? What shall enable a believer to bear all this? Nothing but "the consolation there is in Christ." (Phil. ii. 1.)

Jesus is indeed the brother born for adversity. He is the friend that sticketh closer than a brother, and He alone can comfort His people. He can be touched with the feeling of their infirmities, for He suffered Himself. (Heb. iv. 15.) He knows what sorrow is, for He was a man of sorrows. He knows what an aching body is, for His body was racked with pain. He cried, "All my bones are out of joint." (Ps. xxii. 14.) He knows what poverty and weariness are, for He was often wearied and had not where to lay His head. He knows what family unkindness is, for even His brethren did not believe Him. He had no honour in His own house.

And Jesus knows exactly how to comfort His afflicted people. He knows how to pour in oil and wine into the wounds of the spirit,-how to fill up gaps in empty hearts,-how to speak a word in season to the weary,-how to heal the broken heart,-how to make all our bed in sickness,-how to draw nigh when we are faint, and say, "Fear not: I am thy salvation." (Lam. iii. *57.)*

We talk of sympathy being pleasant. There is no sympathy like that of Christ. In all our afflictions He is afflicted. He knows our sorrows. In all our pain He is pained, and like the good Physician, He will not measure out to us one drop of sorrow too much. David once said, "In the multitude of my thoughts within me, Thy comforts delight my soul." (Ps. xciv. 19.) Many a believer, I am sure, could say as much. "If the Lord himself had not stood by me, the deep waters would have gone over my soul" (Ps. cxxiv. 5.)

How a believer gets through all his troubles appears wonderful. How he is carried through the fire and water he passes through seems past comprehension. But the true account of it is just this,-that Christ is not only justification and sanctification, but consolation also.

Oh, you who want unfailing comfort, I commend you to Christ! In Him alone there is no failure. Rich men are disappointed in their treasures. Learned men are disappointed in their books. Husbands are disappointed in their wives. Wives are disappointed in their husbands. Parents are disappointed in their children. Statesmen are disappointed when, after many a struggle, they attain place and power. They find out, to their cost, that it is more pain than pleasure,-that it is disappointment, annoyance, incessant trouble, worry, vanity, and vexation of spirit. But no man was ever disappointed in Christ.

(d) But as Christ is all in the comforts of a true Christian in time present, so Christ is *all in his hopes for time to come.*

Few men and women, I suppose, are to be found who do not indulge in hopes of some kind about their souls. But the hopes of the vast majority are nothing but vain fancies. They are built on no solid foundation. No living man but the real child of God,-the sincere, thorough-going Christian,-can give a reasonable account of the hope that is in him. No hope is reasonable which is not Scriptural.

A true Christian has a good hope when he looks forward: the worldly man has none. A true Christian sees light in the distance: the worldly man sees nothing but darkness. And what is the hope of a true Christian? It is just this,-that Jesus Christ is coming again, coming without sin,-coming with all His people,-coming to wipe away every tear,-coming to raise His sleeping saints from the grave,-coming to gather together all His family, that they may be for ever with Him.

Why is a believer patient? Because he looks for the coming of the Lord. He can bear hard things without murmuring. He knows the time is short. He waits quietly for the King.

Why is he moderate in all things? Because he expects his Lord soon to return. His treasure is in heaven: his good things are yet to come. The world is not his rest, but an inn; and an inn is not home. He knows that He that shall come will soon come, and will not

tarry. Christ is coming, and that is enough.

This is indeed a "blessed hope!" (Titus ii. 13.) Now is the school-time,-then the eternal holiday. Now is the tossing on the waves of a troublesome world,-then the quiet harbour. Now is the scattering,-then the gathering. Now is the time of sowing,-then the harvest. Now is the working season,-then the wages. Now is the cross,-then the crown.

People talk of their "expectations" and hopes from this world. None have such solid expectations as a saved soul. He can say, "My soul, wait thou only upon God; my expectation is from Him." (Ps. lxii. 5.)

In all true saving religion Christ is all: all in justification,-all in sanctification,-all in comfort,-all in hope. Blessed is that mother's child that *knows* it, and far more blessed is he that *feels* it too. Oh, that men would prove themselves, and see what they know of it for their own souls!

IV. One thing more I will add, and then I have done. Let us understand that *Christ will be all in heaven*.

I cannot dwell long on this point. I have not power, if I had space and room. I can ill describe things unseen and a world unknown. But this I know, that all men and women who reach heaven will find that even there also "Christ is all."

Like the altar in Solomon's temple, Christ crucified will be the grand object in heaven. That altar struck the eye of every one who entered the temple gates. It was a great brazen altar, twenty cubits broad,-as broad as the front of the temple itself. (2 Chron. iii. 4; iv. 1.) So in like manner will Jesus fill the eyes of all who enter glory. In the midst of the throne, and surrounded by adoring angels and saints, there will be "the Lamb that was slain." And "the Lamb shall be the light" of the place. (Rev. v 6; xxi. 23.)

The *praise* of the Lord Jesus will be the eternal song of all the inhabitants of heaven. They will say with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain. Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be to Him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever." (Rev. v. 12, 13.)

The *service* of the Lord Jesus will be one eternal occupation of all the inhabitants of heaven. We shall "serve Him day and night in His temple." (Rev. vii. 13.) Blessed is the thought that we shall at length attend on Him without distraction, and work for Him without weariness.

The *presence* of Christ Himself shall be one ever lasting enjoyment of the inhabitants of heaven. We shall "see His face," and hear His voice, and speak with Him as friend with friend. (Rev. xxii. 4.) Sweet is the thought that whosoever may be wanting at the marriage supper, the Master Himself will be there. His presence will satisfy all our wants. (Ps. xvii. 15.)

What a sweet and glorious home heaven will be to those who have loved the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity! Here we live by faith in Him, and find peace, though we see Him not. There we shall see Him face to face, and find He is altogether lovely. "Better" indeed will be the "sight of the eyes than the wandering of the desire!" (Eccles. vi. 9.)

But alas, how little fit for heaven are many who talk of "going to heaven" when they die, while they manifestly have no saving faith, and no real acquaintance with Christ. You give Christ no honour here. You have no communion with Him. You do not love Him. Alas! what could you do in heaven? It would be no place for you. Its joys would be no joys for you. Its happiness would be a happiness into which you could not enter. Its employments would be a weariness and a burden to your heart. Oh, repent and change before it be too late!

I trust I have now shown how deep are the foundations of that little expression, "Christ is all."

I might easily add to the things I have said, if space permitted. The subject is not exhausted, I have barely walked over the surface of it There are mines of precious truth connected with it, which I have left unopened.

I might show how *Christ ought to be all in a visible Church*. Splendid religious buildings, numerous religious services, gorgeous ceremonies, troops of ordained men, all, all are nothing in the sight of God, if the Lord Jesus Himself in all His offices is not honoured, magnified, and exalted. That Church is but a dead carcase, in which Christ is not "all."

I might show how *Christ ought to be all in a ministry*. The great work which ordained men are intended to do, is to lift up Christ. We are to be like the pole on which the brazen serpent was hung. Weare useful so long as we exalt the great object of faith, but useful no further. We are to be ambassadors to carry tidings to a rebellious world about the King's Son, and if we teach men to think more about us and our office than about Him, we are not fit for our place. The Spirit will never honour that minister who does not testify of Christ,-who does not make Christ "all."

I might show how language seems exhausted in the Bible, in describing Christ's various offices. I might describe how figures seem endless, which are employed in unfolding Christ's fulness. The High Priest, the Mediator, the Redeemer, the Saviour, the Advocate, the Shepherd, the Physician, the Bridegroom, the Head, the Bread of Life, the Light of the World, the Way, the Door, the Vine, the Rock, the Fountain, the Sun of Righteousness, the Forerunner, the Surety, the Captain, the Prince of Life, the Amen, the Almighty, the Author and Finisher of Faith, the Lamb of God, the King of Saints, the Wonderful, the Mighty God, the Counsellor, the Bishop of Souls,-all these, and many more, are names given to Christ in Scripture. Each is a fountain of instruction and comfort for every one who is willing to drink of it. Each supplies matter for useful meditation.

But I trust I have said enough to throw light on the point I want to impress on the minds of all who read this paper. I trust I have said enough to show the immense importance of the practical conclusions with which I now desire to finish the subject.

(1) Is Christ all? Then let us LEARN THE UTTER USELESSNESS OF A CHRISTLESS RELIGION.

There are only too many baptized men and women who practically know nothing at all about Christ. Their religion consists in a few vague notions and empty expressions. "They trust they are no worse than others. They keep to their church. They try to do their duty. They do nobody any harm. They hope God will be merciful to them. They trust the Almighty will pardon their sins, and take them to

heaven when they die." This is about the whole of their religion

But what do these people know practically about Christ? Nothing: nothing at all! What experimental acquaintance have they with His offices and work, His blood, His righteousness, His mediation, His priesthood, His intercession? None: none at all! Ask them about a saving faith,-ask them about being born again of the Spirit,-ask them about being sanctified in Christ Jesus. What answer will you get? You are a barbarian to them. You have asked them simple Bible questions. But they know no more about them experimentally, than a Buddhist or a Turk. And yet this is the religion of hundreds and thousands of people who are called Christians, all over the world!

If any reader of this paper is a man of this kind, I warn him plainly that such Christianity will never take him to heaven. It may do very well in the eye of man. It may pass muster very decently at the vestry-meeting, in the place of business, in the House of Commons, or in the streets. But it will never comfort you. It will never Satisfy your conscience. It will never save your soul.

I warn you plainly, that all notions and theories about God being merciful without Christ, and excepting through Christ, are baseless delusions and empty fancies. Such theories are as purely an idol of man's invention as the idol of Juggernaut they are all of the earth, earthy. They never came down from heaven. The God of heaven has sealed and appointed Christ as the one only Saviour and way of life, and all who would be saved must be content to be saved by Him, or they will never be saved at all.

Let every reader take notice. I give you fair warning this day. A religion without Christ will never save your soul.

(2) Let me say another thing. Is Christ all? Then LEARN THE ENORMOUS FOLLY OF JOINING ANYTHING WITH CHRIST IN THE MATTER OF SALVATION.

There are multitudes of baptized men and women who profess to honour Christ, but in reality do Him great dishonour. They give Christ a certain place in their system of religion, but not the place which God intended Him to fill. Christ alone is not "all in all" to their souls.-No! it is either Christ and the Church,-or Christ and the sacraments,-or Christ and His ordained ministers,-or Christ and their own repentance,-or Christ and their own goodness,-or Christ and their own prayers,-or Christ and their own sincerity and charity, on which they practically rest their souls.

If any reader of this paper is a Christian of this kind, I warn him also plainly, that his religion is an offence to God. You are changing God's plan of salvation into a plan of your own devising. You are in effect deposing Christ from His throne, by giving the glory due to Him to another.

I care not who it is that teaches such religion, and on whose word you build. Whether he be Pope or Cardinal, Archbishop or Bishop, Dean or Archdeacon, Presbyter or Deacon, Episcopalian or Presbyterian, Baptist or Independent, Wesleyan or Plymouth Brother, whosoever adds anything to Christ, teaches you wrong.

I care not what it is that you add to Christ. Whether it be the necessity of joining the Church of Rome, or of being an Episcopalian, or of becoming a Free Churchman, or of giving up the liturgy, or of being dipped,-whatever you may practically add to Christ in the matter of salvation, you do Christ an injury.

Take heed what you are doing. Beware of giving to Christ's servants the honour due to none but Christ. Beware of giving the Lord's ordinances the honour due unto the Lord. Beware of resting the burden of your soul on anything but Christ, and Christ alone.

(3) Let me say another thing. Is Christ all?

LET ALL WHO WANT TO BE SAVED, APPLY DIRECT TO CHRIST.

There are many who hear of Christ with the ear, and believe all they are told about Him. They allow that there is no salvation excepting in Christ. They acknowledge that Jesus alone can deliver them fromhell, and present them faultless before God. But they seem never to get beyond this general acknowledgement. They never fairly lay hold on Christ for their own souls. They stick fast in a state of wishing, and wanting, and feeling, and intending' and never get any further. They see what we mean: they know it is all true. They hope one day to get the full benefit of it: but at present they get no benefit whatever. The world is their "all." Politics are their "all." Pleasure is their "all." Business is their "all." But Christ is not their all.

If any reader of this paper is a man of this kind, I warn him also plainly, he is in a bad state of soul. You are as truly in the way to hell in your present condition, as Judas Iscariot, or Ahab, or Cain. Believe me, there must be actual faith in Christ, or else Christ died in vain, so far as you are concerned. It is not looking at the bread that feeds the hungry man, but the actual eating of it. It is not gazing on the lifeboat that saves the shipwrecked sailor, but actual getting into it. It is not knowing and believing that Christ is a Saviour that can save your soul, unless there are actual transactions between you and Christ. You must be able to say, "Christ is my Saviour, because I have come to Him by faith, and taken Him for my own."-"Much of religion, said Luther, turns on being able to use possessive pronouns. Take from me the word 'my,' and you take from me God!"

Hear the advice I give you this day, and act upon it at once. Stand still no longer, waiting for some imaginary frames and feelings which will never come. Hesitate no longer, under the idea that you must first of all obtain the Spirit, and then come to Christ. Arise and come to Christ just as you are. He waits for you, and is as willing to save as He is mighty. He is the appointed Physician for sin-sick souls. Deal with Him as you would with your doctor about the cure of a disease of your body. Make a direct application to Him, and tell Him all your wants. Take with you words this day, and cry mightily to the Lord Jesus for pardon and peace, as the thief did on the cross. Do as that man did: cry, "Lord, remember me." (Luke xxiii. 42.) Tell Him you have heard that He receives sinners, and that you are such. Tell Him, you want to be saved, and ask Him to save you. Rest not till you have actually tasted for yourself that the Lord is gracious. Do this, and you shall find, sooner or later, if you are really in earnest, that "Christ is all."

(4) One more thing let me add. Is Christ all?

Then LET ALL HIS CONVERTED PEOPLE DEAL WITH HIM AS IF THEY REALLY BELIEVED IT. LET THEM LEAN ON HIM AND TRUST HIM FAR MORE THAN THEY HAVE EVER DONE YET.

Alas, there are many of the Lord's people who live far below their privileges! There are many truly Christian souls who rob themselves of their own peace and forsake their own mercies. There are many who insensibly join their own faith, or the work of the Spirit in their own hearts, to Christ, and so miss the fulness of Gospel peace. There are many who make little progress in their pursuit of holiness, and shine with a very dim light. And why is all this? Simply because in nineteen cases out of twenty men do not make Christ all in all.

Now I call on every reader of this paper who is a believer, I beseech him for his own sake, to make sure that Christ is really and thoroughly his all in all. Beware of allowing yourself to mingle anything of your own with Christ.

Have you faith? It is a priceless blessing. Happy indeed are they who are willing and ready to trust Jesus. But take heed you do not make a Christ of your faith. Rest not on your own faith, but on Christ.

Is the work of the Spirit in your soul? Thank God for it. It is a work that shall never over thrown. But oh, beware, lest, unawares to yourself, you make a Christ of the work of the Spirit! Rest not on the work of the Spirit, but on Christ.

Have you any inward feelings of religion, and experience of grace? Thank God for it. Thousands have no more religious feeling than a cat or log. But oh, beware lest you make a Christ of your feelings and sensations! They are poor, uncertain things, and sadly dependent on our bodies and outward circumstances. Rest not a grain of weight on your feelings. Rest only on Christ.

Learn, I entreat you, to look more and more at the great *object of faith,* Jesus Christ, and to keep your mind dwelling on Him. So doing you would find faith, and all the other graces grow, though the growth at the time might be imperceptible to yourself. He that would prove a skilful archer, must look not at the arrow, but at the mark.

Alas, I fear there is a great piece of pride and unbelief still sticking in the hearts of many believers. Few seem to realize how much they need a Saviour. Few seem to understand how thoroughly they are indebted to Him. Few seem to comprehend how much they need Him every day. Few seem to feel how simply and like a child they ought to hang their souls on Him. Few seem to be aware how full of love He is to His poor, weak people, and how ready to help them! And few therefore seem to know the peace, and joy, and strength, and power to live a godly life, which is to be had in Christ.

Change your plan, reader, if your conscience tells you you are guilty: change your plan, and learn to trust Christ more. Physicians love to see patients coming to consult them: it is their office to receive the sickly, and if possible to effect cures. The advocate loves to be employed: it is his calling. The husband loves his wife to trust him and lean upon him: it is his delight to cherish her, and promote her comfort. And Christ loves His people to lean on Him, to rest in Him, to call on Him, to abide in Him.

Let us all learn and strive to do so more and more. Let us live on Christ. Let us live in Christ. Let us live with Christ. Let us live to Christ. So doing we shall prove that we fully realize that "Christ is all." So doing, we shall feel great peace, and attain more of that "holiness without which no man shall see the Lord." (Heb. xii. 14.)

Christian Leaders of the Last Century

by

J. C. Ryle
(1816-1900)

Daniel Rowlands

CHAPTER 1

One of the greatest spiritual champions of the last century whom I wish to introduce to my readers in this chapter, is one who is very little known. The man I mean is the Rev. Daniel Rowlands of Llangeitho in Cardiganshire. Thousands of my countrymen, I suspect, have some little acquaintance with Whitefield, Wesley, and Romaine, who never even heard the name of the great apostle of Wales.

That such should be the case need not surprise us. Rowlands was a Welsh clergyman, and seldom preached in the English language. He resided in a very remote part of the Principality, and hardly ever came to London. His ministry was almost entirely among the middle and lower classes in about five counties in Wales. These circumstances alone are enough to account for the fact that so few people know anything about him. Whatever the causes may be there are not many Englishmen who understand Welsh, or can even pronounce the names of the parishes where Rowlands used to preach. In the face of these circumstances, we have no right to be surprised if his reputation has been confined to the land of his nativity.

In addition to all this, we must remember that no biographical account of Rowlands was ever drawn up by his contemporaries. Materials for such an account were got together by one of his sons, and forwarded to Lady Huntingdon. Her death, unfortunately, immediately afterwards, prevented these materials being used, and what became of them after her death has never been ascertained. The only memoirs of Rowlands are two lives, written by clergymen who are still living. They are both excellent and useful in their way, but of course they labour under the disadvantage of having been drawn up long after the mighty subject of them had passed away.*

These two volumes, and some very valuable information which I have succeeded in obtaining from a kind correspondent in Wales, are the only mines of matter to which I have had access in drawing up this memoir.

Enough, however, and more than enough, is extant, to prove that Daniel Rowlands, in the highest sense, was one of the spiritual giants of the last century. It is a fact that Lady Huntingdon, no mean judge of clergymen, had the highest opinion of Rowlands. Few people had better opportunities of forming a judgment of preachers than she had, and she thought Rowlands was second only to Whitefield. It is a fact that no British preacher of the last century kept together in one district such enormous congregations of souls for fifty years as Rowlands did. It is a fact, above all, that no man a hundred years ago seems to have preached with such unmistakable power of the Holy Ghost accompanying him as Rowlands. These are great isolated facts that cannot be disputed. Like the few scattered bones of extinct mammoths and mastodons, they speak volumes to all who have an ear to hear. They tell us that, in considering and examining Daniel Rowlands, we are dealing with no common man.

Daniel Rowlands was born in the year 1713, at Pant-y-.beudy in the parish of Llancwnlle, near Llangeitho, Cardiganshire. He was the second son of the Rev. Daniel Rowlands, rector of Llangeitho, by Jennet, his wife. When a child of three years old, he had a narrow escape of death, like John Wesley. A large stone fell down the chimney on the very spot where he had been sitting two minutes before, which, had he not providentially moved from his place, must have killed him. Nothing else is known of the first twenty years of his life, except the fact that he received his education at Hereford Grammar School, and that he lost his father when he was eighteen years old. It appears, from a tablet in Llangeitho Church, that when Rowlands was born, his father was fifty-four and his mother forty-five years old. His father's removal could not therefore have been a premature event, as he must have attained the ripe age of seventy-two.

From some cause or other, of which we can give no account, Rowlands appears to have gone to no University. His father's death may possibly have made a difference in the circumstances of the family. At any rate, the next fact we hear about him after his father's death, is his ordination in London at the early age of twenty, in the year 1733. He was ordained by letters dimissory from the Bishop of St. David's, and it is recorded, as a curious proof both of his poverty and his earnestness of character, that he went to London on foot.

The title on which Rowlands was ordained was that of curate to his elder brother John, who had succeeded his father, and held the three adjacent livings of Llangeitho, Llancwnlle, and Llandewibrefi. He seems to have entered on his ministerial duties like thousands in his clay--without the slightest adequate sense of his responsibilities, and utterly ignorant of the gospel of Christ. According to Owen he was a good classical scholar, and had made rapid progress at Hereford School in all secular learning. But in the neighbourhood where he was born and began his ministry, he is reported never to have given any proof of fitness to be a minister. He was only known as a man remarkable for natural vivacity, of middle size, of a firm make, of quick and nimble action, very adroit and successful in all games and athletic amusements, and as ready as any one, after doing duty in church on Sunday morning, to spend the rest of God's day in sports and revels, if not in drunkenness. Such was the character of the great apostle of Wales for some time after his ordination! He was never likely, afterwards, to forget St. Paul's words to the Corinthians, "Such were some of you" (I Cor. VI. II), or to doubt the possibility of any one's conversion.

The precise time and manner of Rowlands' conversion are points involved in much obscurity. According to Morgan, the first thing that awakened him out of his spiritual slumber, was the discovery that, however well he tried to preach, he could not prevent one of his congregations being completely thinned by a dissenting minister named Pugh. It is said that this made him alter his sermons, and adopt a more awakening and alarming style of address. According to Owen, he was first brought to himself by hearing a well-known excellent clergyman, named Griffith Jones, preach at Llandewibrefi. On this occasion his appearance, as he stood in the crowd before the pulpit, is said to have been so full of vanity, conceit, and levity, that Mr. Jones stopped in his sermon and offered a special prayer for him, that God would touch his heart, and make him an instrument for turning souls from darkness to light This prayer is said to have had an immense effect on Rowlands, and he is reported to have been a different man from that day. I do not attempt to reconcile the two accounts. I can quite believe that both are true. When the Holy Ghost takes in hand the conversion of a soul, he often causes a variety of circumstances to concur and co-operate in producing it. This, I am sure, would be the testimony of all experienced believers. Owen got hold of one set of facts, and Morgan of another. Both happened probably about the same time, and both probably are true.

One thing, at any rate, is very certain. From about the year I738, when Rowlands was twenty-five, a complete change came over his life and ministry. He began to preach like a man in earnest, and to speak and act like one who had found out that sin, and death, and judgment, and heaven, and hell, were great realities. Gifted beyond most men with bodily and mental qualifications for the work of the pulpit, he began to consecrate himself wholly to it, and threw himself, body, and soul, and mind, into his sermons. The consequence, as might be expected, was an enormous amount of popularity. The churches where he preached were crowded to suffocation. The effect of his ministry, in the way of awakening and arousing sinners, was something tremendous. "The impression," says Morgan, "on the hearts of most people, was that of awe and distress, and as if they saw the end of the world drawing near, and hell ready to swallow them up. His fame soon spread throughout the country, and people came from all parts to hear him. Not only the churches were filled, but also the churchyards. It is said that, under deep conviction, numbers of the people lay down on the ground in the churchyard of Llancwnlle, and it was not easy for a person to pass by without stumbling against some of them."

At this very time, however curious it may seem, it is clear that Rowlands did not preach the full gospel. His testimony was unmistakably truth, but still it was not the whole truth. He painted the spirituality and condemning power of the law in such vivid colours that his hearers trembled before him, and cried out for mercy. But he did not yet lift up Christ crucified in all his fulness, as a refuge, a physician, a redeemer, and a friend; and hence, though many were wounded, they were not healed. How long he continued preaching in this strain it is, at this distance of time, extremely difficult to say. So far as I can make out by comparing dates, it went on for about four years. The work that he did for God in this period, I have no doubt, was exceedingly useful, as a preparation for the message of later days. I, for one, believe that there are places, and times, and seasons, and congregations, in which powerful preaching of the law is of the greatest value. I strongly suspect that many evangelical congregations in the present day would be immensely benefited by a broad, powerful exhibition of God's law. But that there was too much law in Rowlands' preaching for four years after his conversion, both for his own comfort and the good of his hearers, is very evident from the fragmentary accounts that remain of his ministry.

The means by which the mind of Rowlands was gradually led into the full light of the gospel have not been fully explained by his

biographers. Perhaps the simplest explanation will be found in our Lord Jesus Christ's words, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine" (John VII. 17). Rowlands was evidently a man who honestly lived up to his light, and followed on to know the Lord. His Master took care that he did not long walk in darkness, but showed him "the light of life." One principal instrument of guiding him into the whole truth was that same Mr. Pugh who, at an earlier period, had thinned his congregation! He took great interest in Rowlands at this critical era in his spiritual history, and gave him much excellent advice. "Preach the gospel, dear sir," he would say; " preach the gospel to the people, and apply the balm of Gilead, the blood of Christ, to their spiritual wounds, and show the necessity of faith in the crucified Saviour." Happy indeed are young ministers who have an Aquila or Priscilla near them, and when they get good advice are willing to listen to it! The friendship of the eminent layman, Howell Harris, with whom Rowlands became acquainted about this time, was no doubt a great additional help to his soul. In one Way or another, the great apostle of Wales was gradually led into the full noontide light of Christ's truth; and about the year I742, in the thirtieth year of his age, became established as the preacher of a singularly full, free, clear, and well-balanced gospel.

The effect of Rowlands' ministry from this time forward to his life's end was something so vast and prodigious, that it almost takes away one's breath to hear of it. We see unhappily so very little of spiritual influences in the present day, the operations of the Holy Ghost appear confined within such narrow limits and to reach so few persons, that the harvests reaped at Llangeitho a hundred years ago sound almost incredible. But the evidence of the results of his preaching is so abundant and incontestable, that there is no room left for doubt. One universal testimony is borne to the fact that Rowlands was made a blessing to hundreds of souls. People used to flock to hear him preach from every part of the Principality, and to think nothing of travelling fifty or sixty miles for the purpose. On sacrament Sundays it was no uncommon thing for him to have I500, or 2000, or even 2500 communicants! The people on these occasions would go together in companies, like the Jews going up to the temple feast in Jerusalem, and would return home afterwards singing hymns and psalms on their journey, caring nothing for fatigue.

It is useless to attempt accounting for these effects of the great Welsh preacher's ministry, as many do, by calling them religious excitement Such people would do well to remember that the influence which Rowlands had over his hearers was an influence which never waned for at least forty-eight years. It had its ebbs and flows, no doubt, and rose on several occasions to the spring-tide of revivals; but at no time did his ministry appear to be without immense and unparalleled results. According to Charles of Bala, and many other unexceptionable witnesses, it seemed just as attractive and effective when he was seventy years old as it was when he was fifty. When we recollect, moreover, the singular fact that on Sundays, at least, Rowlands was very seldom absent from Llangeitho, and that for forty-eight years he was constantly preaching on the same spot, and not, like Whitefield and Wesley, incessantly addressing fresh congregations, we must surely allow that few preachers have had such extraordinary spiritual success since the days of the apostles.

Of course it would be absurd to say that there was no excitement, unsound profession, hypocrisy, and false fire among the thousands who crowded to hear Rowlands. There was much, no doubt, as there always will be, when large masses of people are gathered together. Nothing, perhaps, is so infectious as a kind of sham, sensational Christianity, and particularly among unlearned and ignorant men. The Welsh, too, are notoriously an excitable people. No one, however, was more fully alive to these dangers than the great preacher himself and no one could warn his hearers more incessantly that the Christianity which was not practical was unprofitable and vain. But, after all, the effects of Rowlands' ministry were too plain and palpable to be mistaken. There is clear and overwhelming evidence that the lives of many of his hearers were vastly improved after hearing him preach, and that sin was checked and distinct knowledge of Christianity increased to an immense extent throughout the Principality.

It will surprise no Christian to hear that, from an early period, Rowlands found it impossible to confine his labours to his own parish. The state of the country was so deplorable as to religion and morality, and the applications he received for help were so many, that he felt he had no choice in the matter. The circumstances under which he first began preaching out of his own neighbourhood are so interesting, as described by Owen, that I shall give his words without abbreviation:

"There was a farmer's wife in Ystradffin, in the county of Carmarthen, who had a sister living near Llangeitho. This woman came at times to see her sister, and on one of these occasions she heard some strange things about the clergyman of the parish--that is, Rowlands. The common saying was, that he was not right in his mind. However, she went to hear him, and not in vain; but she said nothing then to her sister or to anybody else about the sermon, and she returned home to her family. The following Sunday she came again to her sister's home at Llangeitho. 'What is the matter?' said her sister, in great surprise. 'Are your husband and your children well?' She feared, from seeing her again so soon and so unexpectedly, that something unpleasant had happened. 'Oh, yes,' was the reply, 'nothing of that kind is amiss.' Again she asked her, 'what, then, is the matter? ' To this she replied, I don't well know what is the matter. Something that your cracked clergyman said last Sunday has brought me here to day. It stuck in my mind all the week, and never left me night nor day.' She went again to hear, and continued to come every Sunday, though her road was rough and mountainous, and her home more than twenty miles from Llangeitho.

"After continuing to hear Rowlands about half a year, she felt a strong desire to ask him to come and preach at Ystradffin. She made up her mind to try; and, after service one Sunday, she went to Rowlands, and accosted him in the following manner: 'Sir, if what you say to us is true, there are many in my neighbourhood in a most dangerous condition, going fast to eternal misery. For the sake of their souls, come over, sir, to preach to them.' The woman's request took Rowlands by surprise; but without a moment's hesitation he said, in his usual quick way, ' Yes, I will come, if you can get the clergyman's permission.' This satisfied the woman, and she returned home as much pleased as if she had found some rich treasure. She took the first opportunity of asking her clergyman's permission, and easily succeeded. Next Sunday she went joyfully to Llangeitho, and informed Rowlands of her success. According to his promise he went over and preached at Ystradffin, and his very first sermon there was wonderfully blessed. Not less than thirty persons, it is said, were converted that day. Many of them afterwards came regularly to hear him at Llangeitho."

From this time forth, Rowlands never hesitated to preach outside his own parish, wherever a door of usefulness was opened. When he could, he preached in churches. When churches were closed to him, he would preach in a room, a barn, or the open air. At no period, however, of his ministerial life does he appear to have been so much of an itinerant as some of his contemporaries. He rightly judged that hearers of the gospel required to be built up as well as awakened, and for this work he was peculiarly well qualified. Whatever, therefore, he did on week days, the Sunday generally found him at Llangeitho.

The circumstances under which he first began the practice of field-preaching were no less remarkable than those under which he was called to preach at Ystradffin. It appears that after his own conversion he felt great anxiety about the spiritual condition of his old companions in sin and folly. Most of them were thoughtless headstrong young men, who thoroughly disliked his searching sermons, and refused at last to come to church at all. "Their custom," says Owen, "was to go on Sunday to a suitable place on one of the hills above Llangeitho, and there amuse themselves with sports and games." Rowlands tried all means to stop this sinful profanation of the Lord's day, but for some time utterly failed. At last he determined to go there himself on a Sunday. As these rebels against God would not come to him in church, he resolved to go to them on their own ground. He went therefore, and suddenly breaking into the ring as a cockfight was going on, addressed them powerfully and boldly about the sinfulness of their conduct. The effect was so great that not a tongue was raised to answer or oppose him, and from that day the Sabbath assembly in that place was completely given up. For the rest of his life Rowlands never hesitated, when occasion required, to preach in the open air.

The extra-parochial work that Rowlands did by his itinerant preaching was carefully followed up and not allowed to fall to the ground. No one understood better than he did, that souls require almost as much attention after they are awakened as they do before, and that in spiritual husbandry there is need of watering as well as planting. Aided, therefore, by a few zealous fellow-labourers, both lay and clerical, he established a regular system of Societies, on John Wesley's plan, over the greater part of Wales, through which he managed to keep up a constant communication with all who valued the gospel that he preached, and to keep them well together. These societies were all connected with one great Association, which met four times a-year, and of which he was generally the moderator. The amount of his influence at these Association-meetings may be measured by the fact that above one hundred ministers in the Principality regarded him as their spiritual father! From the very first this Association seems to have been a most wisely organized and useful institution, and to it may be traced the existence of the Calvinistic Methodist body in Wales at this very day.

The mighty instrument whom God employed in doing all the good works I have been describing, was not permitted to do them without many trials. For wise and good ends, no doubt - to keep him humble in the midst of his immense success and to prevent his being exalted overmuch--he was called upon to drink many bitter cups. Like his divine Master, he was "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." The greatest of these trials, no doubt, was his ejection from the Church of England in 1763, after serving her faithfully for next to nothing as an ordained clergyman for thirty years. The manner in which this disgraceful transaction was accomplished was so remarkable, that it deserves to be fully described.

Rowlands, it must be remembered, was never an incumbent. From the time of his ordination in 1733, he was simply curate of Llangeitho, under his elder brother John, until the time of his death in 1760. What kind of a clergyman his elder brother was is not very clear. He was drowned at Aberystwith, and we only know that for twenty-seven years he seems to have left everything at Llangeitho in Daniel's hands, and to have let him do just what he liked. Upon the death of John Rowlands, the Bishop of St. David's, who was patron of Llangeitho, was asked to give the living to his brother Daniel, upon the very reasonable ground that he had been serving the parish as curate no less than twenty-seven years I The bishop unhappily refused to comply with this request, alleging as his excuse that he had received many complaints about his irregularities. He took the very singular step of giving the living to John, the son of Daniel Rowlands, a young man twenty-seven years old. The result of this very odd proceeding was, that Daniel Rowlands became curate to his own son, as he had been curate to his own brother, and continued his labours at Llangeitho for three years more uninterruptedly.**

The reasons why the Bishop of St. David's refused to give Rowlands the living of Llangeitho may be easily divined. So long as he was only a curate, he knew that he could easily silence him. Once instituted and inducted as incumbent, he would have occupied a position from which he could not have been removed without much difficulty. Influenced, probably, by some such considerations, the bishop permitted Rowlands to continue preaching at Llangeitho as curate to his son, warning him at the same time that the Welsh clergy were constantly complaining of his irregularities, and that he could not long look over them. These "irregularities," be it remembered, were neither drunkenness, breach of the seventh commandment, hunting, shooting, nor gambling! The whole substance of his offence was preaching out of his own parish wherever he could get hearers. To the bishop's threats Rowlands replied, "that he had nothing in view but the glory of God in the salvation of sinners, and that as his labours had been so much blessed he could not desist."

At length, in the year I763, the fatal step was taken. The bishop sent Rowlands a mandate, revoking his license, and was actually foolish enough to have it served on a Sunday! The niece of an eye-witness describes what happened in the following words "My uncle was at Liangeitho church that very morning. A stranger came forward and served Mr. Rowlands with a notice from the bishop, at the very time when he was stepping into the pulpit. Mr. Rowlands read it, and told the people that the letter which he had just received was 'from the bishop, revoking his license. Mr. Rowlands then said, 'We must obey the higher powers. Let me beg you will go out quietly, and then we shall conclude the service of the morning by the church gate.' And so they walked out, weeping and crying. My uncle thought there was not a dry eye in the church at the moment. Mr. Rowlands accordingly preached outside the church with extraordinary effect."

A more unhappy, ill-timed, blundering exercise of Episcopal power than this, it is literally impossible to conceive! Here was a man of singular gifts and graces, who had no objection to anything in the Articles or Prayer-book, cast out of the Church of England for no other fault than excess of zeal. And this ejection took place at a time when scores of Welsh clergymen were shamefully neglecting their duties, and too often were drunkards, gamblers, and sportsmen, if not worse! That the bishop afterwards bitterly repented of what he did, is very poor consolation indeed. It was too late. The deed was done. Rowlands was shut out of the Church of England, and an immense number of his people all over Wales followed him. A breach 'was made in the walls of the Established Church which will probably never be healed. As long as the world stands, the Church of England in Wales will never get over the injury done to it by the preposterous and stupid revocation of Daniel Rowlands' license.

There is every reason to believe that Rowlands felt his expulsion most keenly. However, it made no difference whatever in his line of action. His friends and followers soon built him a large and commodious chapel in the parish of Llangeitho, and migrated there in a body. He did not even leave Llangeitho rectory; for his son, being rector, allowed him to reside there as long as he lived. In fact, the Church of England lost everything by ejecting him, and gained nothing at all. The great Welsh preacher was never silenced practically

for a single day, and the Church of England only reaped a harvest of odium and dislike in Wales, which is bearing fruit to this very hour.

From the time of his ejection to his death, the course of Rowlands' life seems to have been comparatively undisturbed. No longer persecuted and snubbed by ecclesiastical superiors, he held on his way for twenty-seven years in great quietness, undiminished popularity, and immense usefulness, and died at length in Liangeitho rectory on October the I6th, 1790, at the ripe old age of seventy-seven.

"He was unwell during the last year of his life," says Morgan, "but able to go on with his ministry at Llangeitho, though he scarcely went anywhere else. It was his particular wish that he might go direct from his work to his everlasting rest, and not be kept long on a death-bed. His heavenly Father was pleased to grant his desire, and when his departure was drawing nigh, he had some pleasing idea of his approaching end."

One of his children has supplied the following interesting account of his last days:
"My father made the following observations in his sermons two Sundays before his departure. He said, 'I am almost leaving, and am on the point of being taken from you. I am not tired of work, but in it. I have some presentiment that my heavenly Father will soon release me from my labours, and bring me to my everlasting rest But I hope that he will continue his gracious presence with you after I am gone.' He told us, conversing on his departure after worship the last Sunday, that he should like to die in a quiet, serene manner, and hoped that he should not be disturbed by our sighs and crying. He added, 'I have no more to state, by way of acceptance with God, than I have always stated: I die as a poor sinner, depending fully and entirely on the merits of a crucified Saviour for my acceptance with God.' In his last hours he often used the expression, in Latin, which Wesley used on his death-bed, 'God is with us;' and finally departed in great peace."
Rowlands was buried at Liangeitho, at the east end of the church. His enemies could shut him out of the pulpit, but not out of the churchyard. An old inhabitant of the parish, now eighty-five years of age, says: "I well remember his tomb, and many times have I read the inscription, his name, and age, with that of his wife's, Eleanor, who died a year and two months after her husband. The stone was laid on a three feet wall, but it is now worn out by the hand of time."

Rowlands was once married. It is believed that his wife was the daughter of Mr. Davies of Glynwchaf near Liangeitho. He had seven children who survived him, and two who died in infancy. What became of all his family, and whether there are any lineal descendants of his, I have been unable to ascertain with accuracy.

The engraving of him which faces the title-page of the lives drawn up by Morgan and Owen, gives one the idea of Rowlands being a grave and solemn-looking man. It is probably taken from the picture of him, which Lady Huntingdon sent an artist to take at the very end of his life. The worthy old saint did not at all like having his portrait taken. "Why do you object, sir?" said the artist at last. "Why?" replied the old man, with great emphasis; "I am only a bit of clay like thyself" And then he exclaimed, "Alas! alas! alas! Taking the picture of a poor old sinner! alas! alas! "His countenance" says Morgan, "altered and fell at once, and this is the reason why the picture appears so heavy and cast down."

I have other things yet to tell about Rowlands. His preaching and the many characteristic anecdotes about him deserve special notice. But I must reserve these points for another chapter.

*The memoirs of Rowlands to which I refer are two small volumes by the Rev. John Owen, Rector of Tbrussington, and the Rev. E. Morgan, Vicar of Syston, both in the county of Leicester. The private information which I have received has been supplied by a relative of the great Welsh apostle, though not in lineal descent, the Rev. William Row lands of Fishguard, South Wales. Some few facts, it may be interesting to my readers to know, come from an old man of eighty-five, who, when a boy, heard Rowlands preach.

** For a clue to all this intricacy, I am entirely indebted to the Rev. W. Rowlands of Fishguard. Unless the facts I have detailed are carefully remembered, it is impossible to understand how Daniel Rowlands was so easily turned out of his position. The truth is that he was only a curate.

CHAPTER 2

IN taking a general survey of the ministry of Daniel Rowlands of Liangeitho, the principal thing that strikes one is the extraordinary power of his preaching There was evidently something very uncommon about his sermons. On this point we have the clear and distinct testimony of a great cloud of witnesses. In a day when God raised up several preachers of very great power, Rowlands was considered by competent judges to be equalled by only one man, and to be excelled by none. Whitefield was thought to equal him; but even Whitefield was not thought to surpass him. This is undoubtedly high praise. Some account of the good man's sermons will probably prove interesting to most of my readers. What were their peculiar characteristics? What were they like?

I must begin by frankly confessing that the subject is surrounded by difficulties. The materials out of which we have to form our judgment are exceedingly small. Eight sermons, translated out of Welsh into English in the year I774, are the only literary record which exists of the great Welsh apostle's fifty years' ministry. Besides these sermons, and a few fragments of occasional addresses, we have hardly any means of testing the singularly high estimate, which his contemporaries formed of his preaching powers. When I add to this, that the eight sermons extant appear to be poorly translated, the reader will have some idea of the difficulties I have to contend with.

Let me remark, however, once for alt that when the generation, which heard a great preacher, has passed away, it is often hard to find out the secret of his popularity. No well-read person can be ignorant that Luther and Knox in the sixteenth century, Stephen Marshall in the Commonwealth times, and George Whitefield in the eighteenth century, were the most popular and famous preachers of their respective eras. Yet no one, perhaps, can read their sermons, as we now possess them, without a secret feeling that they do not

answer to their reputation. In short, it is useless to deny that there is some hidden secret about pulpit power, which baffles all attempts at definition. The man, who attempts to depreciate the preaching of Rowlands on the ground that the only remains of him now extant seem poor, will find that he occupies an untenable position. He might as well attempt to depreciate the great champions of the German and Scottish Reformations.

After all, we must remember that no man has a right to pass unfavourable criticisms on the remains of great popular preachers, unless he has first thoroughly considered what kind of thing a popular sermon must of necessity be. The vast majority of sermon-hearers do not want fine words, close reasoning, deep philosophy, metaphysical abstractions, nice distinctions, elaborate composition, profound learning. They delight in plain language, simple ideas, forcible illustrations, direct appeals to heart and conscience, short sentences, fervent, loving earnestness of manner. He who possesses such qualifications will seldom preach to empty benches. He who possesses them in a high degree will always be a popular preacher. Tried by this standard, the popularity of Luther and Knox is easily explained. Rowlands appears to have been a man of this stamp. An intelligent judge of popular preaching can hardly fail to see in his remains, through all the many disadvantages under which we read them, some of the secrets of his marvellous success.

Having cleared my way by these preliminary remarks, I will proceed at once to show my readers some of the leading characteristics of the great Welsh evangelist's preaching. I give them as the result of a close analysis of his literary remains. Weak and poor as they undoubtedly look in the garb of a translation, I venture to think that the following points stand out clearly in Rowlands' sermons, and give us a tolerable idea of what his preaching generally was.

The first thing that I notice in the remains of Rowlands is the constant presence of Christ in all his addresses. The Lord Jesus stands out prominently in almost every page. That his doctrine was always eminently "evangelical" is a point on which I need not waste words. The men about whom I am writing were all men of that stamp. But of all the spiritual champions of last century, none appear to me to have brought Christ forward more prominently than Rowlands. The blood, the sacrifice, the righteousness, the kindness, the patience, the saving grace, the example, the greatness of the Lord Jesus, are subjects which appear to run through every sermon, and to crop out at every turn. It seems as if the preacher could never say enough about his Master, and was never weary of commending him to his hearers. His divinity and his humanity, his office and his character, his death and his life, are pressed on our attention in every possible connection. Yet it all seems to come in naturally, and without effort, as if it were the regular outfiowing of the preacher's mind, and the language of a heart speaking from its abundance. Here, I suspect, was precisely one of the great secrets of Rowlands' power. A ministry full of the Lord Jesus is exactly the sort of ministry that I should expect God to bless. Christ-honouring sermons are just the sermons that the Holy Spirit seals with success.

The second thing that I notice in the remains of Rowlands is a singular richness of thought and matter. Tradition records that he was a diligent student all his life, and spent a great deal of time in the preparation of his sermons. I can quite believe this. Even in the miserable relics, which we possess, I fancy I detect strong internal evidence that he was deeply read in Puritan divinity. I suspect that he was very familiar with the writings of such men as Gurnall, Watson, Brooks, Clarkson, and their contemporaries, and was constantly storing his mind with fresh thoughts from their pages. Those who imagine that the great Welsh preacher was nothing but an empty declaimer of' trite commonplaces, bald platitudes, and hackneyed phrases, with a lively manner and a loud voice, are utterly and entirely mistaken. They will find, even in the tattered rags of his translated sermons, abundant proof that Rowlands was a man who read much and thought much, and gave his hearers plenty to carry away. Even in the thin little volume of eight sermons, which I have, I find frequent quotations from Chrysostom, Augustine, Ambrose, Bernard, and Theophylact. I find frequent reference to things recorded by Greek and Latin classical writers. I mark such names as Homer, Socrates, Plato, Æschines, Aristotle, Pythagoras, Carneades. Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, Nero, the Augean stable, Thersites, and Xantippe, make their appearance here and there. That Rowlands was indebted to his friends the Puritans for most of these materials; I make no question at all. But wherever he may have got his learning, there is no doubt that he possessed it, and knew how to make use of it in his sermons. In this respect I think he excelled all his contemporaries. Not one of them shows so much reading in his sermons as the curate of Llangeitho. Here again, I venture to suggest, was one great secret of Rowlands' success. The man who takes much pains with his sermons, and never brings out what has "cost him nothing," is just the man I expect God will bless. We want well beaten oil for the service of the sanctuary.

The third thing that I notice in the remains of Rowlands is the curious felicity of the language in which he expressed his ideas. Of course this is a point on which I must speak diffidently, knowing literally nothing of the Welsh tongue, and entirely dependent on translation. But it is impossible to mistake certain peculiarities in style, which stand forth prominently in everything, which comes from the great Welsh apostle's mind. He abounds in short, terse, pithy, epigrammatic, proverbial sentences, of that kind which arrests the attention and sticks in the memory of hearers. He has a singularly happy mode of quoting Scriptures in confirming and enforcing the statement he makes. Above all, he is rich in images and illustrations, drawn from everything almost in the world, but always put in such a way that the simplest mind can understand them. Much of the peculiar interest of his preaching, I suspect, may be traced to this talent of putting things in the most vivid and pictorial way. He made his hearers feel that they actually saw the things of which he was speaking. No intelligent reader of the Bible, I suppose, needs to be reminded that in all this Rowlands walked in the footsteps of his divine Master. The sermons of Him who "spake as never man spake," were not elaborate rhetorical arguments. Parables founded on subjects familiar to the humblest intellect, terse, broad, sententious statements, were the staple of our Lord Jesus Christ's preaching. Much of the marvellous success of Rowlands, perhaps, may be traced up to his wise imitation of the best of patterns, the great Head of the Church.

The fourth and last thing, which I notice in the remains of Rowlands, is the large measure of practical and experimental teaching which enters into all his sermons. Anxious as he undoubtedly was to convert sinners and arouse the careless, he never seems to forget the importance of guiding the Church of God and building up believers. Warnings, counsels, encouragements, consolations suited to professing Christians, are continually appearing in all his discourses. The peculiar character of his ministerial position may partly account for this. He was always preaching in the same place, and to many of the same hearers, on Sundays. He was not nearly so much an itinerant as many of his contemporaries. He could not, like Whitefield, and Wesley, and Berridge, preach the same sermon over and over again, and yet feel that probably none of his hearers had heard it before. Set for the defence of the gospel at Llangeitho every Sunday, and seeing every week the same faces looking up to him, he probably found it absolutely necessary to "bring forth new

things as well as old," and to be often exhorting many of his hearers not to stand still in first principles, but to "go on unto perfection." But be the cause what it may, there is abundant evidence in the sermons of Rowlands that he never forgot the believers among his people, and generally contrived to say a good many things for their special benefit. Here again, I venture to think, we have one more clue to his extraordinary usefulness. He "rightly divided the word of truth," and gave to every man his portion. Most preachers of the gospel, T suspect, fail greatly in this matter. They either neglect the unconverted or the true Christians in their congregations. They either spend their strength in perpetually teaching elementary truths, or else they dwell exclusively on the privileges and duties of God's children. From this one-sided style of preaching Rowlands seems to have been singularly free. Even in the midst of the plainest addresses to the ungodly, he never loses the opportunity of making a general appeal to the godly. In a word, his ministry of God's truth was thoroughly well balanced and well-proportioned; and this is just the ministry which we may expect the Holy Ghost will bless.

The manner and delivery of this great man, when he was in the act of preaching, require some special notice. Every sensible Christian knows well that voice and delivery have a great deal to say to the effectiveness of a speaker, and above all of one who speaks in the pulpit A sermon faultless both in doctrine and composition will often sound dull and tiresome, when tamely read by a clergyman with a heavy monotonous manner. A sermon of little intrinsic merit, and containing perhaps not half-a-dozen ideas, will often pass muster as brilliant and eloquent, when delivered by a lively speaker with a good voice. For want of good delivery some men make gold look like copper, while others, by the sheer force of a good delivery, make a few halfpence pass for gold. Truths divine seem really "mended" by the tongue of some, while they are marred and damaged by others. There is deep wisdom and knowledge of human nature in the answer given by an ancient to one who asked what were the first qualifications of an orator "The first qualification," he said, "is action; and the second is action; and the third is action." The meaning of course was, that it was almost impossible to overrate the importance of manner and delivery.

The voice of Rowlands, according to tradition, was remarkably powerful. We may easily believe this, when we recollect that he used frequently to preach to thousands in the open air, and to make himself heard by all without difficulty. But we must not suppose that power was the only attribute of his vocal organ, and that he was nothing better than one who screamed, shouted, and bawled louder than other ministers. There is universal testimony from all good judges who heard him, that his voice was singularly moving, affecting, and tender, and possessed a strange power of drawing forth the sympathies of his hearers. In this respect he seems to have resembled Baxter and Whitefield. Like Whitefield, too, his feelings never interfered with the exercise of his voice; and even when his affections moved him to tears in preaching, he was able to continue speaking with uninterrupted clearness. It is a striking feature of the moving character of his voice that a remarkable revival of religion began at Llangeitho while Rowlands was reading the Litany of the Church of England. The singularly touching and melting manner in which he repeated the- words, "By thine agony and moody sweat, good Lord, deliver us," so much affected the whole congregation, that almost all began to weep loudly, and an awakening of spiritual life commenced which extended throughout the neighbourhood.

Of the manner, demeanour, and action of Rowlands in the delivery of his sermons, mention is made by all who write of him. All describe them as being something so striking and remarkable, that no one could have an idea of them but an eyewitness. He seems to have combined in a most extraordinary degree solemnity and liveliness, dignity and familiarity, depth and fervour. His singular plainness and directness made even the poorest feel at home when he preached; and yet he never degenerated into levity or buffoonery. His images and similes brought things home to his hearers with such graphic' power that they could not help sometimes smiling. But he never made his Master's business ridiculous by pulpit joking. If he did say things that made people smile occasionally, he far more often said things that made them weep.

The following sketch by the famous Welsh preacher, Christmas Evans, will probably give as good an idea as we can now obtain of Rowlands in the pulpit. It deserves the more attention, because it is the sketch of a Welshman, an eye-witness, a keen observer, a genuine admirer of his hero, and one who was himself in after-days a very extraordinary man

"Rowlands' mode of preaching was peculiar to himself - inimitable. Methinks I see him now entering in his black gown through a little door from the outside to the pulpit, and making his appearance suddenly before the immense congregation. His countenance was in every sense adorned with majesty, and it bespoke the man of strong sense, eloquence, and authority. His forehead was high and prominent; his eye was quick, sharp, and penetrating; he had an aquiline or Roman nose, proportionable comely lips, projecting chin, and a sonorous, commanding, and well-toned voice.

"When he made his appearance in the pulpit, he frequently gave out, with a clear and audible voice, Psalm XXVII. 4 to be sung. Only one verse was sung before sermon, in those days notable for divine influences; but the whole congregation joined in singing it with great fervour. Then Rowlands would stand up, and read his text distinctly in the hearing of all. The whole congregation were all ears and most attentive, as if they were on the point of hearing some evangelic and heavenly oracle, and the eyes of all the people were at the same time most intensely fixed upon him. He had at the beginning of his discourse some stirring, striking idea, like a small box of ointment which he opened before the great one of his sermon, and it filed all the house with its heavenly perfume, as the odour of Mary's alabaster box of ointment at Bethany; and the congregation being delightfully enlivened with the sweet odour, were prepared to look for more of it from one box after the other throughout the sermon.

"I will borrow another similitude in order to give some idea of his most energetic eloquence. It shall be taken from the trade of a blacksmith. The smith first puts the iron into the fire, and then blows the bellows softly, making some inquiries respecting the work to be done, while his eye all the time is fixed steadily on the process of heating the iron in the fire. But as soon as he perceives it to be in a proper and pliable state, he carries it to the anvil, and brings the weighty hammer and sledge down on the metal, and in the midst of stunning noise and fiery sparks emitted from the glaring metal, he fashions and moulds it at his will.

"Thus Rowlands, having glanced at his notes as a matter of form, would go on with his discourse in a calm and deliberate manner, speaking with a free and audible voice; but he would gradually become warmed with his subject, and at length his voice became so elevated and authoritative, that it resounded through the whole chapel. The effect on the people was wonderful; you could see nothing but smiles and tears running down the face of all. The first flame of heavenly devotion under the first division having subsided, he

would again look on his scrap of notes, and begin the second time to melt and make the minds of the people supple, until he formed them again into the same heavenly temper. And thus he would do six or seven times in the same sermon.

"Rowlands' voice, countenance, and appearance used to change exceedingly in the pulpit, and he seemed to be greatly excited; but there was nothing low or disagreeable in him--all was becoming, dignified, and excellent. There was such a vehement, invincible flame in his ministry, as effectually drove away the careless, worldly, dead spirit; and the people so awakened drew nigh, as it were, to the bright cloud--to Christ, to Moses, and Elias--eternity and its amazing realities rushing into their minds.

"There was very little, if any, inference or application at the end of Rowlands' sermon, for he had been applying and enforcing the glorious truths of the gospel throughout the whole of his discourse. He would conclude with a very few striking and forcible remarks, which were most overwhelming and invincible; and then he would make a very sweet, short prayer, and utter the benediction. Then he would make haste out of the pulpit through the little door. His exit was as sudden as his entrance. Rowlands was a star of the greatest magnitude that appeared the last century in the Principality; and perhaps there has not been his like in Wales since the days of the apostles."

It seems almost needless to add other testimony to this graphic sketch, though it might easily be added. The late Mr. Jones of Creaton, who was no mean judge, and heard the greatest preachers in England and Wales, used to declare that "he never heard but one Rowlands." The very first time he heard him, he was so struck with his manner of delivery, as well as his sermon, that it led him to a serious train of thought, which ultimately ended in his conversion. Charles of Bala, himself a very eminent minister, said that there was a peculiar " dignity and grandeur" in Rowlands' ministry, "as well as profound thoughts, strength and melodiousness of voice, and clearness and animation in exhibiting the deep things of God." A Birmingham minister, who came accidentally to a place in Wales where Rowlands was preaching to an immense congregation in the open air, says: "I never witnessed such a scene before. The striking appearance of the preacher, and his zeal, animation, and fervour were beyond description. Rowlands' countenance was most expressive; it glowed almost like an angel's."

After saying so much about the gifts and power of this great preacher, it is perhaps hardly fair to offer any specimens of his sermons. To say nothing of the fact that we only possess them in the form of translations, it must never be forgotten that true pulpit eloquence can rarely be expressed on paper. Wise men know well that sermons, which are excellent to listen to, are just the sermons which do not "read" well. However, as I have hitherto generally given my readers some illustrations of the style of my last century heroes, they will perhaps be disappointed if I do not give them a few passages from Rowlands'.

My first specimen shall be taken from his sermon on the words, "All things work together for good to them that love God" (Rom. VIII. 28).

"Observe what he says. Make thou no exception, when he makes none. All! Remember he excepts nothing. Be thou confirmed in thy faith; give glory to God, and resolve, with Job, 'Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.' The Almighty may seem for a season to be your enemy, in order that he may become your eternal friend. Oh! Believers, after all your tribulation and anguish, you must conclude with David, 'It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes.' Under all your disquietudes you must exclaim, 'o the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!' His glory is seen when he works by means; it is more seen when he works without means; it is seen, above all when he works contrary to means. It was a great work to open the eyes of the blind; it was a greater still to do it by applying clay and spittle, things more likely, some think, to take away sight than to restore. He sent a horror of great darkness on Abraham; when he was preparing to give him the best light. He touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh, and lamed him, when he was going to bless him. He smote Paul with blindness, when he was intending to open the eyes of his mind. He refused the request of the woman of Canaan for a while, but afterwards she obtained her desire. See, therefore, that all the paths of the Lord are mercy, and that all things work together for good to them that love him.

"Even affliction is very useful and profitable to the godly. The prodigal son had no thought of returning to his father's house till he had been humbled by adversity. Hagar was haughty under Abraham's roof, and despised her mistress; but in the wilderness she was meek and lowly. Jonah sleeps on board ship, but in the whales belly he watches and prays. Manasseh lived as a libertine at Jerusalem, and committed the most enormous crimes; but when he was bound in chains in the prison at Babylon his heart was turned to seek the Lord his God. Bodily pain and disease have been instrumental in rousing many to seek Christ, when those who were in high health have given themselves no concern about him. The ground, which is not rent and torn with the plough, bears nothing but thistles and thorns. The vines will run wild, in process of time, if they be not pruned and trimmed. So would our wild hearts be overrun with filthy, poisonous weeds, if the true Vinedresser did not often check their growth by crosses and sanctified troubles. 'It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth.' Our Saviour says, 'Every branch that beareth fruit, my Father purgeth, that it may bring forth more fruit.' There can be no gold. or silver finely wrought without being first purified with fire, and no elegant houses built with stones till the hammers have squared and smoothed them. So we can neither become vessels of honour in the house of our Father till we are melted in the furnace of affliction, nor lively stones in the walls of new Jerusalem till the hand of the Lord has beaten off our proud excrescences and tumours with his own hammers.

"He does not say that all things will but do, work together for good. The work is on the wheel, and every movement of the wheel is for your benefit. Not only the angels who encamp around you, or the saints who continually pray for you, but even your enemies, the old dragon and his angels, are engaged in this matter. It is true; this is not their design. No They think they are carrying on their own work of destroying you, as it is said of the Assyrian whom the Lord sent to punish a hypocritical nation, 'Howbeit, he meaneth not so;' yet it was God's work that he was carrying on, though he did not intend to do so. All the events that take place in the world carry on the same work--the glory of the Father and the salvation of his children. Every illness and infirmity that may seize you, every loss you may meet with, every reproach you may endure, every shame that may colour your faces, every sorrow in your hearts, every agony and pain in your flesh, every aching in your bones, are for your good. Every change in your condition - your fine weather and your rough weather, your sunny weather and your cloudy weather, your ebbing and your flowing, your liberty and your imprisonment, all turn out for good. Oh, Christians, see what a harvest of blessings ripens from this text! The Lord is at work; all creation is at work; men and angels, friends and foes, all are busy, working together for good. Oh, dear Lord Jesus, what hast thou seen in us that thou

shouldst order things so wondrously for us, and make all things--all things to work together for our good?"

My second specimen shall be taken from his sermon on Rev. III. 20

"Oh, how barren and unfruitful is the soul of man, until the word descends like rain upon it, and it is watered with the dew of heaven! But when a few drops have entered and made it supple, what a rich harvest of graces do they produce! Is the heart so full of malice that the most suppliant knee can expect no pardon? Is it as hard to be pacified and calmed as the roaring sea when agitated by a furious tempest? Is it a covetous heart; so covetous that no scene of distress can soften it into sympathy, and no object of wretchedness extort a penny from its gripe? Is it a wanton and adulterous heart, which may as soon be satisfied as the sea can be filled with gold? Be it so. But when the word shall 'drop on it as the rain, and distil as the dew,' behold, in an instant the flint is turned into flesh, the tumultuous sea is hushed into a calm, and the mountains of Gilboa are clothed with herbs and flowers, where before not a green blade was to be seen! See the mighty change! It converts Zaccheus, the hard-hearted publican and rapacious tax-gatherer, into a restorer of what he had unjustly gotten, and a merciful reliever of the needy. It tames the furious persecuting Saul, and makes him gentle as a lamb. It clothes Ahab with sackcloth and ashes. It reduces Felix to such anguish of mind that he trembles like an aspen leaf. It disposes Peter to leave his nets, and makes him to catch thousands of souls at one draught in the net of the gospel. Behold, the world is converted to the faith, not by the magicians of Egypt, but by the outcasts of Judea!"

The last specimen that I will give is from his sermon on Heb. I. 9:

"Christ took our nature upon him that he might sympathize with us. Almost every creature is tender toward its own kind, however ferocious to others. The bear will not be deprived of her whelps without resistance: she will tear the spoiler to pieces if she can. But how great must be the jealousy of the Lord Jesus for his people I He will not lose any of them. He has taken them as members of himself, and as such watches over them with fondest care. How much will a man do for one of his members before he suffers it to be cut off? Think not, 0 man, that thou wouldst do more for thy members than the Son of God. To think so would be blasphemy, for the pre-eminence in all things belongs to him. Yea, he is acquainted with all thy temptations, because he was in all things tempted as thou art. Art thou tempted to deny God? So was he. Art thou tempted to kill thyself? So was he. Art thou tempted by the vanities of the world? So was he. Art thou tempted to idolatry? So was he; yea, even to worship the devil. He was tempted from the manger to the cross. He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief The Head in heaven is sympathizing with the feet that are pinched and pressed on earth, and says, 'Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?'"

I should find no difficulty in adding to these extracts, if the space at my command did not forbid me. Feeble and unsatisfactory, as they undoubtedly are, in the form of a translation, they will perhaps give my readers some idea of what Rowlands was in the pulpit, so far as concerns the working of his mind. Of his manner and delivery, of course, they cannot give the least idea. It would be easy to fill pages with short, epigrammatic, proverbial sayings culled from his sermons, of which there is a rich abundance in many passages. But enough, perhaps, has been brought forward to give a general impression of the preaching that did such wonders at LIangeitho. Those who want to know more of it should try to get hold of the little volume of translated sermons from which my extracts have been made. Faintly and inadequately as it represents the great Welsh preacher, it is still a volume worth having, and one that ought to be better known than it is. Scores of books are reprinted in the present day, which are not half so valuable as Rowlands' eight sermons.

The inner life and private character of the great Welsh preacher would form a deeply interesting subject, no doubt, if we knew more about them. But the utter absence of all materials except a few scattered anecdotes leaves us very much in the dark. Unless the memoirs of great men are written by relatives, neighbours, or contemporaries, it stands to reason that we shall know little of anything but their public conduct and doings. This applies eminently to Daniel Rowlands. He had no Boswell near him to chronicle the details of his long and laborious life, and to present him to us as he appeared at home. The consequence is, that a vast quantity of interesting matter, which the Church of Christ would like to know, lies buried with him in his grave.

One thing, at any rate, is very certain. His private life was as holy, blameless, and consistent, as the life of a Christian can be. Some fifteen years ago, the Quarterly Review contained an article insinuating that he was addicted to drunkenness, which called forth an indignant and complete refutation from many competent witnesses in South Wales, and specially from the neighbourhood of Llangeitho. - That such charges should be made against good men need never surprise us. Slander and lying are the devil's favourite weapons, when he wants to injure the mightiest assailants of his kingdom. Satan is pre-eminently "a liar." Bunyan, Whitefield, and Wesley had to drink of the same bitter cup as Rowlands. But that the charge against Rowlands was a mere groundless, malicious falsehood, was abundantly proved by Mr. Griffith, the vicar of Aberdare, in a reply to the article of the Quarterly Review, printed at Cardiff. We need not be reminded, if we read our Bibles, who it was of whom the wicked Jews said, "Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners" (Matt. XI. 19). If the children of this world cannot prevent the gospel being preached, they try to blacken the character of the preacher. What saith the Scripture? " The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?" (Matt X. 24, 25).

The only light that we can throw on the character and private habits of Rowlands is derived from the few anecdotes which still survive about him. I shall, therefore, conclude my account of him by presenting them to my readers without note or comment.

One leading feature in Rowlands' character was his humility. Like every eminent servant of God of whom much is known, he had a deep and abiding sense of his own sinfulness, weakness, and corruption, and his constant need of God's grace. On seeing a vast concourse of people coming to hear him, he would frequently exclaim: "Oh, may the Lord have mercy on me, and help me, a poor worm, sinful dust and ashes." When a backslider was pointed out to him, who had once been one of his followers, he said: "It is to be feared indeed that he is one of my disciples; for had he been one of my Lord's disciples, he would not have been in such a state of sin and rebellion." He often used to say, during his latter days, that there were four lessons which he had laboured to learn throughout the whole course of his religious life, and yet that he was but a dull scholar even in his old age. These lessons were the following.. (I.) To repent without despairing; (2.) To believe without being presumptuous; (3.) To rejoice without falling into levity (4.) To be angry without sinning. He used also often to say, that a self-righteous legal spirit in man was like his shirt, a garment which he puts on first,

and puts off last.

A habit of praying much was another leading characteristic of Rowlands. It is said that he used often to go to the top of Aeron Hills, and there pour out his heart before God in the most tender and earnest manner for the salvation of the numerous inhabitants of the country which lay around him. "He lived," says Morgan, "in the spirit of prayer, and hence his extraordinary success. On one occasion having engaged to preach at a certain church, which stood on an eminence, he had to cross a valley in sight of the people, who were waiting for him in the churchyard. They saw him descend into the bottom of the valley, but then lost sight of him for some time. At last, as he did not come up by the time they expected, and service-time had arrived, some of them went down the hill in search of him. They discovered him, at length, on his knees in a retired spot a little out of the road. He got up when he saw them, and went with them, expressing sorrow for the delay; but he added, 'I had a delightful opportunity below.' The sermon which followed was most extraordinary in power and effect."

Diligence was another distinguishing feature in the character of Rowlands. He was continually improving his mind, by reading, meditation, and study. He used to be up and reading as early as four o'clock in the morning; and he took immense pains in the preparation of his sermons. Morgan says, "Every part of God's Word, at length, became quite familiar to him. He could tell chapter and verse of any text or passage of Scripture that was mentioned to him. Indeed the word of God dwelt richly in him. He had, moreover, a most retentive memory, and when preaching, could repeat the texts referred to, off-hand, most easily and appropriately."

Self-denial was another leading feature of Rowlands' character. He was all his life a very poor man; but he was always a contented one, and lived in the simplest way. Twice he refused the offer of good livings--one in North Wales, and the other in South Wales--and preferred to remain a dependent curate with his flock at Llangeitho. The offer in one case came from the excellent John Thornton. When he heard that Rowlands had refused it, and ascertained his reasons, he wrote to his son, saying, "I had a high opinion of your father before, but now I have a still higher opinion of him, though he declines my offer. The reasons he assigns are highly creditable to him. It is not a usual thing with me to allow other people to go to my pocket; but tell your father that he is fully welcome to do so whenever he pleases." The residence of the great Welsh evangelist throughout life was nothing but a small cottage possessing no great accommodation. His journeys, when he went about preaching, were made on horseback, until at last a small carriage was left him as a legacy in his old age. He was content, when journeying in his Master's service, with very poor fare and very indifferent lodgings, he says himself, "We used to travel over hills and mountains, on our little nags, without anything to eat but the bread and cheese we carried in our pockets, and without anything to drink but water from the springs. If we had a little buttermilk in some cottages we thought it a great thing. But now men must have tea, and some, too, must have brandy!' Never did man seem so thoroughly to realize the primitive and apostolic rule of life. Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content."

Courage was another prominent feature in Rowlands' character. He was often fiercely persecuted when he went about preaching, and even his life was sometimes in danger. Once, when he was preaching at Aberystwith, a man swore in a dreadful manner that he would shoot him immediately. He aimed his gun, and pulled the trigger, but it would not go off--On another occasion his enemies actually placed gunpowder under the place where he was about to stand when preaching, and laid a train to a distant point, so that at a given time they might apply a match, and blow up the preacher and congregation. However, before the time arrived, a good man providentially discovered the whole plot, and brought it to nothing. --On other occasions riotous mobs were assembled, stones were thrown, drums beaten, and every effort made to prevent the sermon being heard. None of these things ever seems to have deterred Rowlands for a moment. As long as he had strength to work he went on with his Master's business, unmoved by opposition and persecution. Like Colonel Gardiner, he "feared God, and beside him he feared nothing." He had given himself to the work of preaching the gospel, and from this work he allowed neither clergy nor laity, bishops nor gentry, rich nor poor, to keep him back.

Fervent and deep feeling was the last characteristic, which I mark in Rowlands. He never did anything by halves. Whether preaching or praying, whether in church or in the open air, he seems to have done all he did with heart and soul, and mind and strength. "He possessed as much animal spirits," says one witness, "as were sufficient for half a dozen men." This energy seems to have had an inspiring effect about it, and to have swept everything before it like a fire. One who went to hear him every month from Carnarvonshire, gives a striking account of his singular fervour when Rowlands was preaching on John III. 16. He says, "He dwelt with such overwhelming, extraordinary thoughts on the love of God, and the vastness of his gift to man, that I was swallowed up in amazement. I did not know that my feet were on the ground; yea, I had no idea where I was, whether on earth or in heaven. But presently he cried out with a most powerful voice, 'Praised be God for keeping the Jews in ignorance respecting the greatness of the Person in their hands! Had they known who he was, they would never have presumed to touch him, much less to drive nails through his blessed hands and feet, and to put a crown of thorns on his holy head. For had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. I will wind up this account of Rowlands by mentioning a little incident which the famous Rowland Hill often spoke of in his latter days. He was attending a meeting of Methodist ministers in Wales in one of his visits, when a man, nearly a hundred years old, got up from a corner of the room and addressed the meeting in the following words

"Brethren, let me tell you this: I have heard Daniel Rowlands preach, and I heard him once say, Except your consciences be cleansed by the blood of Christ, you must all perish in the eternal fires." Rowlands, at that tune, had been dead more than a quarter of a century. Yet, even at that interval, "though dead he spoke." It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all remembrance, that the ministry, which exalts Christ, crucified most, is the ministry, which produces most lasting effects. Never, perhaps, did any preacher exalt Christ more than Rowlands did, and never did preacher leave behind him such deep and abiding marks in the isolated corner of the world where he laboured a hundred years ago.

John Wesley

The second in the list of English Reformers of the last century, whose history I propose to consider, is a man of world-wide reputation --the famous John Wesley.

CHAPTER 1

The name of this great evangelist is perhaps better known than that of any of his fellow-labourers a hundred years ago. This, however, is easily accounted for. He lived to the ripe old age of eighty-eight. For sixty-five years he was continually before the eyes of the public, and doing his Master's work in every part of England. He founded a new religious denomination, remarkable to this very day for its numbers, laboriousness, and success, and justly proud of its great founder. His life has been repeatedly written by his friends and followers, his works constantly reprinted, his precepts and maxims reverentially treasured up and embalmed, like Joseph's bones. In fact, if ever a good Protestant has been practically canonized, it has been John Wesley! It would be strange indeed if his name was not well known.

Of such a man as this I cannot pretend to give more than a brief account in the short space of a few pages. The leading facts of his long and well-spent life, and the leading features of his peculiar character, are all that I can possibly compress into the limits of this memoir. Those who want more must look elsewhere. (Footnote: The principal lives of Wesley by Methodist hands are those of Whitehead, Moore, and Watson. Southey's well-known life of Wesley is not a fair book, and the unfavourable animus of the writer throughout is painfully manifest. The best, most impartial, and most complete account of Wesley is one published by Seeley m 1856, by an anonymous writer.)

John Wesley was born on the 17th of June 1703, at Epworth, in North Lincolnshire, of which parish his father was rector. He was the ninth of a family of at least thirteen children, comprising three sons and ten daughters. Of the daughters, those who grew up made singularly foolish and unhappy marriages. Of the Sons, the eldest, Samuel, was for some years usher of Westminster School, and an intimate friend of the famous Bishop Atterbury, and finally died head-master of Tiverton School. The second, John, was founder of the Methodist communion; and the third, Charles, was almost throughout life John's companion and fellow-labourer.

John Wesley's father was a man of considerable learning and great activity of mind. As a writer, he was always bringing out something either in prose or in verse, but nothing, unhappily for his pocket, which was ever acceptable to the reading public, or is much cared for in the present day. As a politician, he was a zealous supporter of the Revolution which brought into England the House of Orange; and it was on this account that Queen Mary presented him to the Crown living of Epworth. As a clergyman, he seems to have been a diligent pastor and preacher, of the theological school of Archbishop Tillotson. As a manager of his worldly affairs, he appears to have been most unsuccessful. Though rector of a living now valued at £1000 a-year, he was always in pecuniary difficulties, was once in prison for debt, and finally left his widow and children almost destitute. When I add to this that he was not on good terms with his parishioners, and, poor as he was, insisted on going up to London every year to attend the very unprofitable meetings of Convocation for months at a time, the reader will probably agree with me that, like too many, he was a man of more book-learning and cleverness than good sense.

The mother of John Wesley was evidently a woman of extraordinary power of mind. She was the daughter of Dr. Annesley, a man well known to readers of Puritan theology as one of the chief promoters of the Morning Exercises, and ejected from St. Giles', Cripplegate, in 1662. From him she seems to have inherited the masculine sense and strong decided judgement which distinguished her character. To the influence of his mother's early training and example, John Wesley, doubtless, was indebted for many of his peculiar habits of mind and qualifications.

Her own account of the way in which she educated all her children, in one of her letters to her son John, is enough to show that she was no common woman, and that her sons were not likely to turn out common men. She says, "None of them was taught to read till five years old, except Keziah, in whose case I was over-ruled; and she was more years in learning than any of the rest had been months. The way of teaching was this: the day before a child began to learn, the house was set in order, every one's work appointed them, and a charge given that none should come into the room from nine to twelve, or from two to five, which were our school hours. One day was allowed the child wherein to learn its letters, and each of them did in that time know all its letters, great and small, except Molly and Nancy, who were a day and a half before they knew them perfectly, for which I then thought them very dull; but the reason why I thought them so was because the rest learned so readily, and your brother Samuel, who was the first child I ever taught, learnt the alphabet in a few hours. He was five years old on the 10th of February; the next day he began to learn, and as soon as he knew the letters, began at the first chapter of Genesis. He was taught to spell the first verse, then to read it over and over till he could read it off-hand without any hesitation; so on to the second, &c., till he took ten verses for a lesson, which he quickly did. Easter fell low that year, and by Whitsuntide he could read a chapter very well, for he read continually, and had such a prodigious memory that I cannot remember ever to have told him the same word twice. What was stranger, any word he had learnt in his lesson he knew wherever he saw it, either in his Bible or any other book, by which means he learned very soon to read an English author well."

Her energetic and decided conduct, as wife of a parish clergyman, is strikingly illustrated by a correspondence still extant between herself and her husband on a curious occasion. It appears that during Mr. Wesley's long-protracted absences from home in attending Convocation, Mrs. Wesley, dissatisfied with the state of things at Epworth, began the habit of gathering a few parishioners at the rectory on Sunday evenings and reading to them. As might naturally have been expected, the attendance soon became so large that her husband took alarm at the report he heard, and made some objections to the practice. The letters of Mrs. Wesley on this occasion are a model of strong, hard-headed, Christian good sense, and deserve the perusal of many timid believers in the present day. After defending what she had done by many wise and unanswerable arguments, and beseeching her husband to consider seriously the bad consequences of stopping the meeting, she winds up all with the following remarkable paragraph :--" If you do, after all, think fit to dissolve this assembly, do not tell me that you desire me to do it, for that will not satisfy my conscience. But send me your positive command in such full and express terms as may absolve me from all guilt and punishment for neglecting the opportunity of doing good, when you and I shall appear before the great and awful tribunal of our Lord Jesus Christ."

A mother of this stamp was just the person to leave deep marks and impressions on the minds of her children. Of the old rector of Epworth we can trace little in his sons John and Charles, except, perhaps, their poetical genius. But there is much in John's career and character throughout life which shows the hand of his mother.

The early years of John Wesley's life appear to have passed quietly away in his Lincolnshire home. The only remarkable event recorded by his biographers is his marvellous escape from being burnt alive, when Epworth rectory was burned down. This happened in 1709, when he was six years, and seems to have been vividly impressed on his mind. He was pulled through the bedroom window, at the last moment, by a man who, for want of a ladder, stood on another man's shoulders. Just at that moment the roof of the house fell in, but happily fell inward, and the boy and his deliverer escaped unhurt. He says himself, in his description of the event, "When they brought me to the house where my father was, he cried out, 'Come, neighbours, let us kneel down I let us give thanks to God! He has given me all my eight children; let the house go, I am rich enough.'"

In the year 1714, at the age of eleven, John Wesley was placed at the Charter-house School in London. That mighty plunge in life--a boy's first entrance at a public school--seems to have done him no harm. He had probably been well grounded at his father's house in all the rudiments of a classical education, and soon became distinguished for his diligence and progress at school. At the age of sixteen his elder brother, then an usher at Westminster, describes him as "a brave boy, learning Hebrew as fast as he can."

In the year 1720, at the age of seventeen, John Wesley went up to Oxford as an undergraduate, having been elected to Christ Church. Little is known of the first three or four years of his university life, except that he was steady, studious, and remarkable for his classical knowledge and genius for composition. It is evident, however, that he made the best use of his time at college, and picked up as much as he could in a day when honorary class-lists were unknown, and incitements to study were very few. Like most great divines, he found the advantage of university education all his life long. Men might dislike his theology, but they could never say that he was a fool, and had no right to be heard.

In the beginning of 1725, at the age of twenty-two, he seems to have gone through much exercise of mind as to the choice of a profession. Naturally enough, he thought of taking orders, but was somewhat daunted by serious reflection on the solemnity of the step. This very reflection, however, appears to have been most useful to hint and to have produced in his mind deeper thoughts about God, his soul, and religion generally, than he had ever entertained before. He began to study divinity, and to go through a regular course of reading for the ministry. He bad, probably, no very trustworthy guide in his choice of religious literature at this period. The books which apparently had the greatest influence on him were Jeremy Taylor's "Holy Living and Dying," and Thomas Kempis's "Imitation of Christ." Devout and well-meaning as these authors are, they certainly were not likely to give him very clear views of scriptural Christianity, or very cheerful and happy views of Christ's service. In short, though they did him good by making him feel that true religion was a serious business, and a concern of the heart, they evidently left him in much darkness and perplexity.

At this stage of John Wesley's life, his correspondence with his father and mother is peculiarly interesting, and highly creditable both to the parents and the son. He evidently opened his mind to them, and told them all his mental and spiritual difficulties. His letters and their replies are well worth reading. They all show more or less absence of spiritual light and clear views of the gospel. But a singular vein of honesty and conscientiousness runs throughout. One feels "This is just the spirit that God will bless. This is the single eye to which will be given more light."

Let us hear what his father says about the question, "Which is the best commentary on the Bible?" "I answer, the Bible itself. For the several paraphrases and translations of it in the Polyglot, compared with the original and with one another, are in my opinion, to an honest, devout, industrious, and humble man, infinitely preferable to any comment I ever saw."

Let us hear what his mother says on the point of taking holy orders:--"The alteration of your temper has occasioned me much speculation. I, who am apt to be sanguine, hope it may proceed from the operation of God's Holy Spirit, that by taking off your relish for earthly enjoyments he may prepare and dispose your mind for a more serious and close application to things of a more sublime and spiritual nature. If it be so, happy are you if you cherish those dispositions. And now in good earnest resolve to make religion the business of your life; for, after all, that is the one thing that, strictly speaking, is necessary: all things beside are comparatively little to the purposes of life. I heartily wish you would now enter upon a strict examination of yourself, that you may know whether you have a reasonable hope of salvation by Jesus Christ. If you have the satisfaction of knowing, it will abundantly reward your pains; if you have not, you will find a more reasonable occasion for tears than can be met with in a tragedy. This matter deserves great consideration by all but especially by those designed for the ministry, who ought above all things to make their own calling and election sure, lest, after they have preached to others, they themselves should be cast away."

Let us hear what his mother says about Thomas à Kempis's opinion, that all mirth or pleasure is useless, if not sinful. She observes:--"I take Kempis to have been an honest, weak man, that had more zeal than knowledge, by his condemning all mirth or pleasure as sinful or useless, in opposition to so many direct and plain texts of Scripture. Would you judge of the lawfulness or unlawfulness of pleasures? of the innocence or malignity of actions? take this rule,--whatever weakens your reason, impairs the tenderness of your conscience, obscures your sense of God, or takes off the relish of spiritual things; in short, whatever increases the strength and authority of your body over your mind, that thing is sin to you, however innocent it may be in itself"

Let us hear what John Wesley himself says in a letter on the opinion of Jeremy Taylor--" Whether God has forgiven us or no, we know not; therefore let us be sorrowful for ever having sinned." He remarks--"Surely the graces of the Holy Ghost are not of so little force as that we cannot perceive whether we have them or not. If we dwell in Christ, and Christ in us, which He will not do unless we be regenerate, certainly we must be sensible of it. If we never can have any certainty of being in a state of salvation, good reason is it that every moment should be spent, not in joy, but in fear and trembling; and then, undoubtedly, in this life we are of all men most miserable. God deliver us from such a fearful expectation as this.

Correspondence of this style could hardly fail to do good to a young man in John Wesley's frame of mind. It led him no doubt to closer study of the Scriptures, deeper self-examination, and more fervent prayer. Whatever scruples he may have had were finally removed, and he was at length ordained deacon on September the 19th, 1725, by Dr. Potter, then Bishop of Oxford, and afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury.

In the year 1726 John Wesley was elected Fellow of Lincoln College, after a contest of more than ordinary severity. His recently adopted seriousness of deportment and general religiousness were used as a handle against him by his adversaries. But his high character carried him triumphantly through all opposition, to the great delight of his father. Tried as he apparently was at the time in his temporal circumstances, he wrote: "Whatever will be my own fate before the summer is over God knows; but, wherever I am, my Jack is Fellow of Lincoln."

The eight years following John Wesley's election to his fellowship of Lincoln--from 1726 to 1734--form a remarkable epoch in his life, and certainly gave a tone and colour to all his future history. During the whole of these years be was resident at Oxford, and for some time at any rate acted as tutor and lecturer in his college. Gradually, however, he seems to have laid himself out more and more to try to do good to others, and latterly was entirely taken up with it.

His mode of action was in the highest degree simple and unpretending. Assisted by his brother Charles, then a student of Christ Church, he gathered a small society of like-minded young men, in order to spend some evenings in a week together in the study of the Greek Testament This was in November 1729. The members of this society were at first four in number; namely, John Wesley, Charles Wesley, Mr. Morgan of Christ Church, and Mr. Kirkman of Merton. At a somewhat later period they were joined by Mr. Ingham of Queen's, Mr. Broughton of Exeter, Mr. Clayton of Brazenose, the famous George Whitefield of Pembroke, and the well-known James Hervey of Lincoln.

This little band of witnesses, as might reasonably have been expected, soon began to think of doing good to others, as well as getting good themselves. In the summer of 1730 they began to visit prisoners in the castle and poor people in the town, to send neglected children to school, to give temporal aid to the sick and needy, and to distribute Bibles and Prayer-books among those who had not got them. Their first steps were taken very cautiously, and with frequent reference to John Wesley's father for advice. Acting by his advice, they laid all their operations before the Bishop of Oxford and his chaplain, and did nothing without full ecclesiastical sanction.

Cautious, and almost childish, however, as the proceedings of these young men may appear to us in the present day, they were too far in advance of the times to escape notice, hatred, and opposition. A kind of persecution and clamour was raised against Wesley and his companions as enthusiasts, fanatics, and troublers of Israel. They were nicknamed the "Methodists" or Holy Club," and assailed with a storm of ridicule and abuse. Through this, however, they manfully persevered, and held on their way, being greatly encouraged by the letters of the old Rector of Epworth. In one of them he says, "I hear my son John has the honour of being styled the Father of the Holy Club. If it be so, I am sure I must be the grandfather of it, and I need not say that I had rather any of my sons should be so dignified and distinguished than have the title His Holiness."

The real amount of spiritual good that John Wesley did during these eight years of residence at Oxford is a point that cannot easily be ascertained. With all his devotedness, asceticism, and self-denial, it must be remembered that at this time he knew very little of the pure gospel of Christ. His views of religious truth, to say the least, were very dim, misty, defective, and indistinct. No one was more sensible of this than he afterwards was himself, and no one could be more ready and willing to confess it. Such books as "Law's Serious Call," "Law's Christian Perfection," "Theologia Germanica;" and mystical writers, were about the highest pitch of divinity that he had yet attained. But we need not doubt that he learned experience at this period which he found useful in afterlife. At any rate he became thoroughly trained in habits of laboriousness, time-redemption, and self-mortification, which he carried with him to the day of his death. God has his own way of tempering and preparing instruments for his work, and, whatever we may think, we may be sure his way is best.

In the year 1734 John Wesley's father died, and the family home was broken up. Just at this time the providence of God opened up to him a new sphere of duty, the acceptance of which had a most important effect on his whole spiritual history. This sphere was the colony of Georgia, in North America. The trustees of that infant settlement were greatly in want of proper clergymen to send out, both to preach the gospel to the Indians and to provide means of grace for the colonists. At this juncture John Wesley and his friends were suggested to their notice, as the most suitable persons they could find, on account of their high character for regular behaviour, attention to religious duties, and readiness to endure hardships. The upshot of the matter was, that an offer was made to John Wesley, and, after conferring with Mr. Law, his mother, his elder brother, and other friends, he accepted the proposal of the trustees, and, in company with his brother Charles and their common friend Mr. Ingham, set sail for Georgia.

Wesley landed in Georgia on the 6th of February 1736, after a long stormy voyage of four months, and remained in the colony two years. I shall not take up the reader's time by any detailed account of his proceedings there. It may suffice to say, that, for any good he seems to have done, his mission was almost useless. Partly from the inherent difficulties of an English clergyman's position in a colony--partly from the confused and disorderly condition of the infant settlement where he was stationed--partly from a singular want of tact and discretion in dealing with men and things--partly, above all, from his own very imperfect views of the gospel, Wesley's expedition to Georgia appears to have been a great failure, and he was evidently glad to get away.

The ways of God, however, are not as man's ways. There was a "need be" for the two years' absence in America, just as there was for Philip's journey down the desert road to Gaza, and Paul's sojourn in prison at Caesarea. If Wesley did nothing in Georgia, he certainly gained a great deal. If he taught little to others, he undoubtedly learned much. On the outward voyage lie became acquainted with some Moravians on board, and was deeply struck by their deliverance from "the fear of death." in a storm. After landing in Georgia he continued his intercourse with them, and discovered to his astonishment that there was such a thing as personal assurance of forgiveness. These things, combined with the peculiar trials, difficulties, and disappointments of his colonial ministry, worked mightily on his mind, and showed him more of himself and the gospel than he had ever learned before. The result was that he landed at Deal on the 1st of February I738, a very much humbler, but a much wiser man than he had ever been before. In plain words, he had become the subject of a real inward work of the Holy Ghost.

Wesley's own accounts of his spiritual experience during these two years of his life are deeply interesting. I will transcribe one or two of them.

On February the 7th, 1736, he records:--" On landing in Georgia I asked the advice of Mr. Spangenberg, one of the German pastors, with regard to my own conduct. He said in reply, 'My brother, I must first ask you one or two questions. Have you the witness within yourself? Does the Spirit of God bear witness with your spirit that you are a child of God ?'--I was surprised, and knew not what to answer. He observed it, and asked, 'Do you know Jesus Christ'?'--I paused, and said, 'I know he is the Saviour of the world.'--'True,' replied he; 'but do you know he has saved you?'--I answered, 'I hope he has died to save me.' '--He only added, 'Do you know yourself?' --I said, 'I do.' But I fear they were vain words."

On January 24th, 1738, on board ship on his homeward voyage, he makes the following record:--'I went to America to convert the Indians; but oh, who shall convert me? Who, what is he that will deliver me from this evil heart of unbelief? I have a fair summer religion; I can talk well; nay, and believe myself while no danger is near. But let death look me in the face, and my spirit is troubled, nor can I say to die is gain."

On February the 1st, 1738, the day that he landed in England, he says: "It is now two years and almost four months since I left my native country in order to teach the Georgian Indians the nature of Christianity; but what have I learned of myself in the meantime? Why, what I least suspected, that I, who went to America to convert others, was myself never converted to God! I am not mad, though I thus speak; but I speak the words of truth and soberness."

"If it be said that I have faith--for many such things hive I heard from miserable comforters--I answer, so have the devils a sort of faith; but still they are strangers to the covenant of promise. ... The faith I want is a sure trust and confidence in God that through the merits of Christ my sins are forgiven, and I reconciled to the favour of God. I want that faith which St. Paul recommends to all the world, especially in his Epistle to the Romans; that faith which makes every one that hath it to cry, 'I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.' I want that faith which none can have without knowing that he hath it."

Records like these are deeply instructive. They teach that important lesson which man is so slow to learn--that we may have a great deal of earnestness and religiousness without any true soul-saving and soul-comforting religion--that we may be diligent in the use of fasting, prayers, forms, ordinances, and the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, without knowing anything of inward joy, peace, or communion with God--and above all, that we may be moral in life, and laborious in good works, without being true believers in Christ, or fit to die and meet God. Well would it be for the churches if truths like these were proclaimed from every pulpit, and pressed on every congregation! Thousands, for lack of such truths, are walking in a vain shadow, and totally ignorant that they are yet dead in sins. If any one wants to know how far a man may go in outward goodness, and yet not be a true Christian, let him carefully study the experience of John Wesley. I am bold to say that it is eminently truth for the times.

A man hungering and thirsting after righteousness, as Wesley was now, was not left long without more light The good work which the Holy Ghost had begun within him was carried on rapidly after he landed in England, until the sun rose on his mind, and the shadows passed away. Partly by conference with Peter Bohler, a Moravian, and other Moravians in London, partly by study of the Scriptures, partly by special prayer for living, saving, justifying faith as the gift of God, he was brought to a clear view of the gospel, and found out the meaning of joy and peace in simply believing. Let me add--as an act of justice to one of whom the world was not worthy--that at this period he was, by his own confession, much helped by Martin Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans.

This year, 1738, was beyond doubt the turning-point in Wesley's spiritual history, and gave a direction to all his subsequent life. It was in the spring of this year that he began a religious society at the Moravian Chapel in Fetter Lane, London, which was the rough type and pattern of all Methodist societies formed afterwards. The rules of this little society are extant still, and with some additions, modifications, and improvements, contain the inward organisation of Methodism in the present day. It was at this period also that he began preaching the new truths he had learned, in many of the pulpits in London, and soon found, like Whitefield, that the proclamation of salvation by grace, and justification by faith, was seldom allowed a second time. It was in the winter of this year, after returning from a visit to the Moravian settlement in Germany, that he began aggressive measures on home heathenism, and in the neighbourhood of Bristol followed Whitefield's example by preaching in the open air, in rooms, or wherever men could be brought together.

We have now reached a point at which John Wesley's history, like that of his great contemporary Whitefield, becomes one undeviating uniform narrative up to the time of his death. It would be useless to dwell on one year more than another. He was always occupied in one and the same business, always going up and down the land preaching, and always conducting evangelistic measures of some kind and description. For fifty-three years--from 1738 to 1791--he held on his course, always busy, and always busy about one thing--attacking sin and ignorance everywhere, preaching repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ everywhere--awakening open sinners, leading on inquirers, building up saints--never wearied, never swerving from the path he had marked out, and never doubting of success. Those only who read the Journals he kept for fifty years can have any idea of the immense amount of work that he got through. Never perhaps did any man have so many irons in the fire at one time, and yet succeed in keeping so many hot.

Like Whitefield, he justly regarded preaching as God's chosen instrument for doing good to souls, and hence, wherever he went, his first step was to preach. Like him, too, he was ready to preach anywhere or at any hour--early in the morning or late at night, in church, in chapel, or in room--in streets, in fields, or on commons and greens. Like him, too, he was always preaching more or less the same great truths--sin, Christ, and holiness--ruin, redemption, and regeneration--the blood of Christ and the work of the Spirit--faith, repentance, and conversion--from one end of the year to the other.

Wesley, however, was very unlike Whitefield in one important respect. He did not forget to organise as well as to preach. He was not content with reaping the fields which he found ripe for the harvest He took care to bind up his sheaves and gather them into the barn. He was as far superior to White-field as an administrator and man of method, as he was inferior to him as a mere preacher.(Footnote: A writer in the North British Review has well and forcibly described the difference between the two great English evangelists of the last century. "Whitefield was soul, and Wesley was system. Whitefield was the summer cloud which burst at morning or noon a

fragrant exhalation over an ample track, and took the rest of the day to gather again; Wesley was the polished conduit in the midst of the garden, through which the living water glided in pearly brightness and perennial music, the same vivid stream from day to day. All force and impetus, Whitefield was the powder-blast in the quarry, and by one explosive sermon would shake a district, and detach materials for other men's long work; deft, neat, and painstaking, Wesley loved to split and trim each fragment into uniform plinths and polished stones. Whitefield was the bargeman or the waggoner who brought the timber of the house, and Wesley was the architect who set it up. Whitefield had no patience for ecclesiastical polity, no aptitude for pastoral details, Wesley, with a leader-like propensity for building, was always constructing societies, and with a king-like craft of ruling, was most at home when presiding over a class or a conference. It was their infelicity that they did not always work together; it was the happiness of the age, and the furtherance of the gospel, that they lived alongside of one another.") Shut out from the Church of England by the folly of its rulers, he laid the foundation of a new denomination with matchless skill, and with a rare discernment of the wants of human nature. To unite his people as one body--to give every one something to do--to make each one consider his neighbour and seek his edification--to call forth latent talent and utilise it in some direction--to keep "all at it and always at it"(to adopt his quaint saying),--these were his aims and objects. The machinery he called into existence was admirably well adapted to carry out his purposes. His preachers, lay-preachers, class-leaders, band-leaders, circuits, classes, bands, love-feasts, and watch-nights, made up a spiritual engine which stands to this day, and in its own way can hardly be improved. If one thing more than another has given permanence and solidity to Methodism, it was its founder's masterly talent for organisation.

It is needless to tell a Christian reader that Wesley had constantly to fight with opposition. The prince of this world will never allow his captives to be rescued from him without a struggle. Sometimes he was in danger of losing his life by the assaults of violent, ignorant, and semi-heathen mobs, as at Wednesbury, Walsall, Colne, Shoreham, and Devizes. Sometimes he was denounced by bishops as an enthusiast, a fanatic, and a sower of dissent. Often--far too often--he was preached against and held up to scorn by the parochial clergy, as a heretic, a mischief maker, and a meddling troubler of Israel. But none of these things moved the good man. Calmly, resolutely, and undauntedly he held on his course, and in scores of cases lived down all opposition. His letters in reply to the attacks made upon him are always dignified and sensible, and do equal honour to his heart and head.

I have now probably told the reader enough to give him a general idea of John Wesley's life and history. I dare not go further. Indeed, the last fifty years of his life were so entirely of one complexion, that I know not where I should stop if I went further. When I have said that they were years of constant travelling, preaching, organising, conferring, writing, arguing, reasoning, counselling, and warring against sin, the world, and the devil, I have just said all that I dare enter upon.

He died at length in 1791, in the eighty-eighth year of his life and the sixty-fifth of his ministry, full of honour and respect, and in the "perfect peace" of the gospel. He had always enjoyed wonderful health, and never hardly knew what it was to feel weariness or pain till he was eighty-two. The weary wheels of life at length stood still, and he died of no disease but sheer old age.

The manner of his dying was in beautiful harmony with his life. He preached within a very few days of his death, and the texts of his two last sermons were curiously characteristic of the man. The last but one was at Chelsea, on February the 18th, on the words, "The king's business requireth haste" (I Sam. xxi. 8). The last of all was at Leatherhead, on Wednesday the 23rd, on the words, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found" (Isa. Iv. 6). After this he gradually sunk, and died on Tuesday the 29th. He retained his senses to the end, and showed clearly where his heart and thoughts were to the very last.

The day but one before he died he slept much and spoke little. Once he said in a low but distinct manner, "There is no way into the holiest but by the blood of Jesus." He afterwards inquired what the words were from which he had preached a little before at Hampstead. Being told they were these, "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich" (2 Cor. viii. 8); he replied, "That is the foundation, the only foundation; there is no other."

The day before he died, he said suddenly, "I will get up." While they were preparing his clothes, he broke out in a manner which, considering his weakness, astonished all present, in singing,--

"I'll praise my Maker while I've breath,
And when my voice is lost in death,
Praise shall employ my noblest powers:
My days of praise shall ne'er be past,
While life, and thought, and being last,
Or immortality endures."

Not long after, a person coming in, he tried to speak, but could not. Finding they could not understand him, he paused a little, and then with all his remaining strength cried out, "The best of all is, God is with us;" and soon after, lifting up his dying voice in token of victory, and raising his feeble arm with a holy triumph, be again repeated the heart-reviving words, "The best of all is, God is with us." The night following he often attempted to repeat the hymn before mentioned, but could only utter the opening words, "I'll praise; I'll praise." About ten o'clock next morning he was heard to articulate the word "Farewell," and then without a groan fell asleep in Christ and rested from his labours. Truly this was a glorious sunset! "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his. "

Wesley was once married. At the age of forty-eight he married a widow lady of the name of Vizelle, of a suitable age, and of some independent property, which she took care to have settled upon herself. The union was a most unhappy one. Whatever good qualities Mrs. Wesley may have had, they were buried and swallowed up in the fiercest and most absurd passion of jealousy. One of his biographers remarks, "Had he searched the whole kingdom, he could hardly have found a woman more unsuitable to him in all important respects." After making her husband as uncomfortable as possible for twenty years, by opening his letters, putting his papers in the-hands of his enemies in the vain hope of blasting his character, and even sometimes laying violent hands on him, Mrs. Wesley at length left her home, leaving word that she never intended to return. Wesley simply states the fact in his journal, saying that he knew not the cause, and briefly adding, "I did not forsake her, I did not dismiss her, I will not recall her."

Like Whitefield, John Wesley left no children. But he left behind him a large and influential communion, which he not only saw spring up, but lived to see it attain a vigorous and healthy maturity. The number of Methodist preachers at the time of his death amounted in the British dominions to 313, and in the United States of America to 198. The number of Methodist members in the British dominions was 76,968, and in the United States 57,621. Facts like these need no comment; they speak for themselves. Few labourers for Christ have ever been so successful as Wesley, and to none certainly was it ever given to see so much with his own eyes.

In taking a general view of this great spiritual hero of the last century, it may be useful to point out some salient points of his character which demand particular attention. When God puts special honour on any of his servants, it is well to analyse their gifts, and to observe carefully what they were. What, then, were the peculiar qualifications which marked John Wesley?

The first thing which I ask the reader to notice is his extraordinary singleness of eye and tenacity of purpose. Once embarked on his evangelistic voyage, he pressed forward, and never flinched for a day. "One thing I do," seemed to be his motto and constraining motive. To preach the gospel, to labour to do good, to endeavour to save souls,--these seemed to become his only objects, and the ruling passion of his life. In pursuit of them he compassed sea and land, putting aside all considerations of ease and rest, and forgetting all earthly feelings. Few men but himself could have gone to Epworth, stood upon their father's tombstone, and preached to an open-air congregation, "Thy kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Few, but himself could have seen fellow-labourers, one after another, carried to their graves, till he stood almost alone in his generation, and yet preached on, as he did, with unabated spirit, as if the ranks around him were still full. But his marvellous singleness of eye carried him through all. "Beware of the man of one book," was the advice of an old philosopher to his pupils. The man of "one thing" is the man who in the long run does great things, and shakes the world.

The second thing I ask the reader to notice is his extraordinary diligence, self-denial, and economy of time. It puts one almost out of breath to read the good man's Journals, and to mark the quantity of work that he crowded into one year. He was to all appearance always working, and never at rest. "Leisure and I," he said, "have taken leave of one another. I propose to be busy as long as I live, if my health is so long indulged to me." This resolution was made in the prime of life; and never was resolution more punctually observed.

"Lord, let me not live to be useless," was the prayer which he uttered after seeing one, whom he once knew as an active and useful man, reduced by age to be a picture of human nature in disgrace, feeble in body and mind, slow of speech and understanding. Even the time which he spent in travelling was not lost. "History, poetry, and philosophy," said he, "I commonly read on horseback, having other employment at other times." When you met him in the street of a crowded city, he attracted notice not only by his bands and cassock, and his long silvery hair, but by his pace and manner; both indicating that all his minutes were numbered, and that not one was to be lost. "But though I am always in haste," he said, "I am never in a hurry, because I never undertake any more work than I can go through with perfect calmness of spirit." Here, again, is one secret of great usefulness. We must abhor idleness; we must redeem time. No man knows how much can be done in twelve hours until he tries. It is precisely those who do most work who find that they can do most.

The last thing which I ask the reader to notice is his marvellous versatility of mind and capacity for a variety of things. No one perhaps can fully realise this who does not read the large biographies which record all his doings, or study his wonderful Journals. Things the most opposite and unlike --things the most petty and trifling--things the most thoroughly secular--things most thoroughly spiritual, --all are alike mastered by his omnivorous mind. He finds time for all, and gives directions about all. One day we find him condensing old divinity, and publishing fifty volumes of theology, called the "Christian Library;"--another day we find him writing a complete commentary on the whole Bible; --another day we find him composing hymns, which live to this day in the praises of many a congregation; --another day we find him drawing up minute directions for his preachers, forbidding them to shout and scream and preach too long, insisting on their reading regularly lest their sermons became threadbare, requiring them not to drink spirits, and charging them to get up early in the morning; --another day we find him calmly reviewing the current literature of the day, and criticising all the new books with cool and shrewd remarks, as if he had nothing else to do. Like Napoleon, nothing seems too small or too great for his mind to attend to; like Calvin, he writes as if he had nothing to do but write, preaches as if he had nothing to do but preach, and administers as if he had nothing to do but administer. A versatility like this is one mighty secret of power, and is a striking characteristic of most men who leave their mark on the world. To be a steam-engine and a penknife, a telescope and a microscope, at the same time, is probably one of the highest attainments of the human mind.

I should think my sketch of Wesley incomplete if I did not notice the objection continually made against him--that he was an Arminian in doctrine. I fully admit the seriousness of the objection. I do not pretend either to explain the charge away, or to defend his objectionable opinions. Personally, I feel unable to account for any well-instructed Christian holding such doctrines as perfection and the defectibility of grace, or denying such as election and the imputed righteousness of Christ.

But, after all, we must beware that we do not condemn men too strongly for not seeing all things in our point of view, or excommunicate and anathematise them because they do not pronounce our shibboleth. It is written in God's Word, "Why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother?" We must think and let think. We must learn to distinguish between things that are of the essence of the gospel and things which are of the perfection of gospel. We may think that a man preaches an imperfect gospel who denies election, considers justification to be nothing more than forgiveness, and tells believers in one sermon that they may attain perfection in this life, and in another sermon that they may entirely fall away from grace. But if the same man strongly and boldly exposes and denounces sin, clearly and fully lifts up Christ, distinctly and openly invites men to believe and repent, shall we dare to say that the man does not preach the gospel at all? Shall we dare to say that he will do no good? I, for one, cannot say so, at any rate. If I am asked whether I prefer Whitefield's gospel or Wesley's, I answer at once that I prefer Whitefield's I am a Calvinist, and not an Arminian. But if I am asked to go further, and to say that Wesley preached no gospel at all, and did no real good, I answer at once that I cannot do so. That Wesley would have done better if he could have thrown off his Armininianisin, I have not the least doubt; but that he preached the gospel, honoured Christ, and did extensive good, I no more doubt than I doubt my own existence.

Let those who depreciate Wesley as an Arminian, read his own words in the funeral sermon which he preached on the occasion of Whitefield's death. He says of his great fellow-labourer and brother:-
"His fundamental point was to give God all the glory of whatever is good in man. In the business of salvation he set Christ as high and man as low as possible. With this point he and his friends at Oxford --the original Methodists so-called-- set out. Their grand principle was, there is no power by nature, and no merit in man. They insisted, 'all grace to speak, think, or act right, is in and from the Spirit of Christ; and all merit is not in man, how high soever in grace, but merely in the blood of Christ.' So he and they taught. There is no power in man, till it is given him from above, to do one good work, to speak one good word, or to form one good desire. For it is not enough to say all men are sick of sin: no, we are all dead in trespasses and sins.

"And we are all helpless, both with regard to the power and the guilt of sin. For who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? None less than the Almighty. Who can raise those that are dead, spiritually dead, in sin? None but he who raised us from the dust of the earth. But on what consideration will he do this? Not for works of righteousness that we have done. The dead cannot praise thee, O Lord, nor can they do anything for which they should be raised to life. Whatever, therefore, God does; he does it merely for the sake of his well-beloved Son. 'He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities. He himself bore all our sins in his own body on the tree. He was delivered for our offences, and rose again for our justification.' Here, then, is the sole meritorious cause of every blessing we can or do enjoy, and, in particular, of our pardon and acceptance with God, of our full and free justification. But by what means do we become interested in what Christ has done and suffered? 'Not by works, lest any man should boast, but by faith alone.' 'We conclude,' says the apostle, 'that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.' And 'to as many as receive Christ he gives power to become sons of God; even to them which believe in his name, who are born not of the will of man but of God.'

"Except a man be thus born again he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. But all who are thus born of the Spirit have the kingdom of God within them. Christ sets up his kingdom in their hearts--righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. That mind is in them which was in Christ Jesus, enabling them to walk as Christ walked. His indwelling Spirit makes them holy in mind, and holy in all manner of conversation. But still, seeing all this is a free gift through the blood and righteousness of Christ, there is eternally the same reason to remember--he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

"You are not ignorant that these are the fundamental doctrines which Mr. Whitefield everywhere insisted on; and may they not be summed up, as it were, in two words--' the new birth, and justification by faith?' These let us insist upon with all boldness, and at all times, in all places, in public and in private. Let us keep close to these good old unfashionable doctrines, how many soever contradict and blaspheme."

Such were the words of the Arminian, John Wesley. I make no comment on them. I only say, before any one despises this great man because he was an Arminian, let him take care that he really knows what Wesley's opinions were. Above all, let him take care that he thoroughly understands what kind of doctrines he used to preach in England a hundred years ago.

CHAPTER 2

ENGLAND a hundred years ago received such deep impressions from John Wesley, that I should not feel I did him justice if I did not give my readers a few select specimens of his writings. Before we turn away from the father of Methodism, let us try to get some distinct idea of his style of thought and his mode of expressing himself. Let us see how his mind worked.

The man who could leave his mark so indelibly on his fellow-countrymen as John Wesley did, we must all feel could have been no ordinary man. The man who could keep his hold on assemblies till he was between eighty and ninety years old, and produce effects second only to those produced by Whitefield, must evidently have possessed peculiar gifts. Two or three extracts from his sermons and other writings will probably be thought interesting and instructive by most Christian readers.

The materials for forming a judgement in this matter are happily abundant, and easily accessible. A volume of fifty-seven sermons lies before me at this moment, prepared for publication by Wesley's own hands, and first published in 1771. It is a volume that deserves far more attention than it generally receives in the present day. The doctrine of some of the discourses, I must honestly confess, is sometimes very defective. Nevertheless, the volume contains many noble passages; and there are not a few pages in it which, for clearness, terseness, pointedness, vigour, and pure Saxon phraseology, are perfect models of good style.

Wesley's preface to his volume of sermons is of itself very remarkable. I will begin by giving a few extracts from it. He says,-- "I design plain truth for plain people. Therefore, of set purpose, I abstain from all nice and philosophical speculations; from all perplexed and intricate reasonings; and, as far as possible, from even the show of learning, unless in sometimes citing the original Scriptures. I labour to avoid all words which are not easy to be understood--all which are not used in common life; and in particular those technical terms that so frequently occur in Bodies of divinity--those modes of speaking which men of reading are intimately acquainted with, but which to common people are an unknown tongue. Yet I am not assured that I do not sometimes slide into them unawares; it is so extremely natural to imagine that a word which is familiar to ourselves is so to all the world.

"Nay, my design is, in some sense, to forget all that ever I have read in my life. I mean to speak in the general, as if I had never read one author, ancient or modern, always excepting the inspired. I am persuaded that, on the one hand, this may be a means of enabling me more clearly to express the sentiments of my heart, while I simply follow the chain of my own thoughts without entangling myself with those of other men; and that, on the other, I shall come with fewer weights upon my mind, with less of prejudice and prepossession, either to search for myself or to deliver to others the naked truth of the gospel.

"To candid, reasonable men I am not afraid to lay open what have been the inmost thoughts of my heart. I have thought, 'I am a creature of a day, passing through life as an arrow through the air. I am a spirit come from God, and returning to God, just hovering over the great gulf, till a few moments hence I am no more seen! I drop into an unchangeable eternity! I want to know one thing,-- the way to heaven--how to land safe on that happy shore. God himself has condescended to teach the way; for this very end he came

from heaven. He hath written it down in a book. Oh, give me that book! At any price give me the book of God! I have it: here is knowledge enough for me. Let me be a man of one book. Here, then, I am free from the busy ways of men. I sit down alone: only God is here. In his presence I open, I read his book; for this end--to find the ways to heaven. Is there a doubt concerning the meaning of what I read ?--does anything appear dark and intricate?--I lift up my heart to the Father of lights: Lord, is it not thy word, "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God:" thou givest liberally, and upbraidest not. Thou hast said, if any be willing to do thy will he shall know. I am willing to do; let me know thy will. I then search after and consider parallel passages of Scripture, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. I meditate thereon with all the earnestness and attention of which my mind is capable. If any doubt still remains, I consult those who are experienced in the ways of God; and then the writings whereby, being dead, they yet speak. And what I thus leant that I teach.'

"But some may say, I have mistaken the way myself although I have undertaken to teach it to others. It is probable that many will think this, and it is very possible that I have. But I trust, whereinsoever I have mistaken, my mind is open to conviction. I sincerely desire to be better informed. I say to God and man, 'What I know not teach thou me.'

"Are you persuaded you see more clearly than me? It is not unlikely that you may. Then treat me as you would desire to be treated yourself upon a change of circumstances. Point me out a better way than I have yet known. Show me it is so by plain proof of Scripture. And if I linger in the path I have been accustomed to tread, and therefore I am unwilling to leave it, labour with me a little; take me by the hand and lead me as I am able to bear. But be not discouraged if I entreat you not to beat me down in order to quicken my pace: I can go but feebly and slowly at best: then I should not be able to go at all. May I not request you, further, not to give me hard name; in order to bring me into the right way. Suppose I was ever so much in the wrong, I doubt this would not set me right. Rather it would make me run so much the further from you, and so get more and more out of the way.

"Nay! perhaps if you are angry, so shall I be too; and then there will be small hopes of finding the truth. If once anger arises, its smoke will so dim the eyes of my soul that I shall be able to see nothing clearly. For God's sake, if it be possible to avoid it, let us not provoke one another to wrath. Let us not kindle in each other this fire of hell; much less blow it up into a flame. If we could discern truth by that dreadful light, would it not be loss rather than gain? For how far is love, even with many wrong opinions, to be preferred before truth itself without love! We may die without the knowledge of many truths, and yet be carried into Abraham's bosom. But if we die without love, what will knowledge avail? Just as much as it avails the devil and his angels!"

The next specimen of John Wesley's mind shall be an extract from a sermon preached by him at St. Mary's, Oxford, before the University, on June 18, 1738, from the words, "By grace ye are saved through faith" (Ephes. ii. 8). It concludes with the following passages,

"At this time more especially will we speak, that by grace ye are saved through faith, because never was the maintaining this doctrine more seasonable than it is at this day. Nothing but this can effectually prevent the increase of the Romish delusion among us. It is endless to attack one by one all the errors of that Church. But salvation by faith strikes at the root, and all fall at once when this is established. It was this doctrine; which our Church justly calls the strong rock and foundation of the Christian religion, that first drove Popery out of these kingdoms, and it is this alone can keep it out. Nothing but this can give a check to that immorality which hath overspread the land as a flood. Can you empty the great deep drop by drop'? Then you may reform us by dissuasion from particular vices. But let the righteousness which is of God by faith be brought in, and so shall its proud waves be stayed. Nothing but this can stop the mouths of those who glory in their shame, and openly 'deny the Lord that bought them.' They can talk as sublimely of the law as he that bath it written by God in his heart. To hear them speak on this head might incline one to think they were not far from the kingdom of God. But take them out of the law into the gospel; begin with the righteousness of faith, with Christ the end of the law to every one that believes; and those who but now appeared almost if not altogether Christians, stand confessed the sons of perdition, as far from life and salvation (God be merciful unto them) as the depth of hell from the height of heaven.

"For this cause the adversary so rages whenever salvation by faith is declared to the world. For this reason did he stir up earth and hell to destroy those who preached it. And for the same reason, knowing that faith alone could overturn the foundation of his kingdom, did he call forth all his forces, and employ all his arts of lies and calumny, to affright that champion of the Lord of hosts, Martin Luther, from reviving it. Nor can we wonder thereat; for as that man of God observes, How would it enrage a proud, strong man, armed, to be stopped and set at nought by a little child coming against him with a reed in his hand? Especially when he knew that little child would surely overthrow him and tread him under foot. Even so, Lord Jesus! thus hath thy strength been even made perfect in weakness! Go forth then, thou little child that believest in him, and his right hand shall teach thee terrible things. Though thou art helpless and weak as an infant of days, the strong man shall not be able to stand before thee. Thou shalt prevail over him, and subdue him, and overthrow him, and trample him under thy feet. Thou shalt march on with the great Captain of thy salvation, conquering and to conquer, until all thine enemies are destroyed, and death is swallowed up in victory."

The next specimen that I will give of John Wesley's preaching is the conclusion of his sermon on justification by faith. It ends with the following striking paragraph. The text is Romans iv. 5:-- "Thou ungodly one who hearest or readest these words, thou vile, helpless, miserable sinner, I charge thee before God, the judge of all, go straight unto Jesus with all thy ungodliness. Take heed thou destroy not thine own soul by pleading thy righteousness more or less. Go as altogether ungodly, guilty, lost, destroyed, deserving and dropping into hell; and thus shalt thou find favour in his sight, and know that he justifieth the ungodly. As such thou shalt be brought unto the blood of sprinkling, as an undone, helpless, damned sinner. Thus look unto Jesus! There is the Lamb of God, who taketh away thy sins! Plead thou no works, no righteousness of thine own! no humility, contrition, sincerity. In no wise. That were, in very deed, to deny the Lord that bought thee. No! Plead thou singly the blood of the covenant, the ransom paid for thy proud, stubborn, sinful soul. Who art thou that now seest and feelest both thine inward and outward ungodliness? Thou art the man! I want thee for my Lord. I challenge thee for a child of God by faith. The Lord hath need of thee. Thou who feelest thou art just fit for hell art just fit to advance his glory, the glory of free grace, justifying the ungodly, and him that worketh not. Oh, come quickly! Believe in the Lord Jesus; and thou, even thou, art reconciled to God."

The last example of John Wesley's preaching that I will bring before the reader, is a portion of a sermon preached by him at St.

Mary's, Oxford, before the University, in 1744. The text is Acts iv. 31, and the title of the sermon is "Scriptural Christianity." After asking the question, "Where does Scriptural Christianity exist?" he proceeds to address his hearers in the following manner.--These hearers, we must remember, were the University of Oxford, Heads of Houses, Professors, Fellows, Tutors, and other residents:-

"I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, if ye do account me a madman or a foot yet as a fool bear with me. It is utterly needful that some one should use great plainness of speech towards you. It is more especially needful at this time; for who knoweth but it may be the last. Who knoweth how soon the righteous Judge may say: 'I will no more be entreated for this people. Though Noah, Daniel, and Job were in this land, they should but deliver their own souls.' And who will use this plainness if I do not? Therefore I, even I, will speak. And I adjure you, by the living God, that ye steel not your hearts against receiving a blessing at my hands. Do not say in your hearts, 'non persuadebis etiamsi persuaseris or, in other words, 'Lord, thou shalt not send by whom thou wilt send. Let me rather perish in my blood than be saved by this man.'

"Brethren, I am persuaded better things of you, though I thus speak. Let me ask you then, in tender love, and in the spirit of meekness, is this city of Oxford a Christian city? Is Christianity, Scriptural Christianity, found here? Are we, as a community of men, so filled with the Holy Ghost as to enjoy in our hearts, and show forth in our lives, the genuine fruits of the Spirit? Are all the magistrates, all heads and governors of colleges and halls, and their respective societies (not to speak of inhabitants of the town), of one heart and one soul'? Is the love of God shed abroad in our hearts? Are our tempers the same that were in Him? Are our lives agreeable thereto? Are we holy, as He who lath called us is holy, in all manner of conversation?

"In the fear, and in the presence of the great God before whom both you and I shall shortly appear, I pray you that are in authority over us (whom I reverence for your office' sake), to consider not after the manner of dissemblers with God, Are you filled with the Holy Ghost? Are you lively portraitures of him whom ye are appointed to represent among men? I have said, ye are gods, ye magistrates and rulers; ye are by office so nearly allied to the God of heaven. In your several stations and degrees ye are to show forth to us the Lord our Governor. Are all the thoughts of your hearts, all your tempers and desires, suitable to your high calling? Are all your words like unto those which come out of the mouth of God? Is there in all your actions dignity and love, a greatness which words cannot express, which can flow only from a heart full of God, and yet consistent with the character of man that is a worm, and the son of man that is a worm?

"Ye venerable men, who are more especially called to form the tender minds of youth, to dispel therein the shades of ignorance and error, and train them up to be heirs unto salvation, are you filled with the Holy Ghost, and with those fruits of the Spirit which your important office so indispensably requires? Is your heart whole with God, and full of love and zeal to set up his kingdom on earth? Do you continually remind those under your care that the one rational end of all our studies is to know, love, and serve the only true God and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent 3 Do you inculcate upon them day by day that love alone never faileth. and that without love all learning is but splendid ignorance, pompous folly, vexation of spirit? Has all you teach an actual tendency to the love of God, and of all mankind for his sake? Have you an eye to this end, in whatever you prescribe, touching the kind, manner, and measure of their studies, desiring and labouring that wherever the lot of these young soldiers of Christ is cast, they may be so many burning and shining lights, adorning the gospel of Christ in all things? And, permit me to ask, do you put forth all your strength in the vast work you have undertaken? Do you labour herein with all your might, exerting every faculty of your souls, using every talent which God hath lent you, and that to the uttermost of your power?

"Let it not be said that I speak here as if all under your care were intended to be clergymen. Not so; I only speak as if they were all intended to be Christians. But what example is set them by us who enjoy the beneficence of our forefathers, by fellows, students, scholars, more especially those who are of some rank and eminence? Do ye, brethren, abound in the fruits of the Spirit, in lowliness of mind, in self-denial and mortification, in tenderness and composure of spirit, in patience, meekness, sobriety, temperance, and in unwearied, restless endeavours to do good unto all men, to relieve their outward wants and to bring their souls to the true knowledge and love of God? Is this the general character of Fellows of colleges? I fear it is not. Rather, have not pride and haughtiness of spirit, impatience and peevishness, sloth and indolency, gluttony and sensuality, and even a proverbial uselessness, been objected to us, perhaps not always by our enemies nor wholly without ground? Oh! that God would roll away this reproach from us, that the very memory of it might perish for ever!

"Many of us are men immediately consecrated to God, called to minister in holy things. Are we, then, patterns to the rest, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity? Is there written on our foreheads and on our hearts, Holiness to the Lord? From what motive did we enter upon the office?

"Was it indeed with a single eye to serve God, trusting that we were inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon us this ministration for the promotion of his glory, and the edifying of' his people 'I And have we clearly determined, by God's grace, to give ourselves wholly to this office? Do we forsake and set aside, as much as in us lies, all worldly cares and studies? Do we apply ourselves wholly to this one thing, and draw all our cares and studies this way? Are we apt to teach? Are we taught of God, that we may be able to teach others also? Do we know God? Do we know Jesus Christ? Hath God revealed his Son in us? And hath he made us able ministers of the new covenant? Where, then, are the seals of our apostleship'? Who that were dead in trespasses and sins, have been quickened by our word? Have we a burning zeal to save souls from death, so that for their sakes we often forget even to eat our bread? Do we speak plainly, by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience? Are we dead to the world, and the things of the world, laying up all our treasure in heaven? Do we lord it over God's heritage, or are we the least, the servants of all? When we bear the reproach of Christ does it sit heavy on us, or do we rejoice therein? When we are smitten on the one cheek, do we resent it? Are we impatient of affronts? or do we turn the other cheek also, not resisting evil, but overcoming evil with good I Have we a bitter zeal, inciting us to strive sharply and passionately with them that are out of the way? or, is our zeal the flame of love, so as to direct all our words with sweetness, lowliness, and meekness of wisdom?

"Once more, what shall we say concerning the youth of this place?--Have you either the form or the power of Christian godliness? Are you humble, teachable, advisable; or stubborn, self-willed, heady, and high-minded? Are you obedient to your superiors as to parents, or do you despise those to whom ye owe the tenderest reverence? Are you diligent in your every business, pursuing your studies with

all your strength? Do you redeem the time, crowding as much work into every day as it can contain? Rather are ye not conscious to yourselves that you waste away day after day, either in reading what has no tendency to Christianity, or in gambling, or in--you know not what? Are you better managers of your fortune than of your time? Do you, out of principle, take care to owe no man anything? Do you remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy, to spend it in the more immediate worship of God! When you are in his house, do you consider God is there? Do you behave as seeing him that is invisible? Do you know how to possess your bodies in sanctification and honour? Are not drunkenness and uncleanness found among you? Yea, are there not a multitude of you who glory in their shame? Do not many of you take the name of God in vain, perhaps habitually, without either remorse or fear? Yea, are there not a multitude among you that are forsworn? I fear a swiftly-increasing multitude? Be not surprised, brethren. Before God and this congregation I own myself to have been of this number, solemnly swearing to observe all those customs which I then knew nothing of, and those statutes which I did not so much as read over, either then or for some years after. What is perjury if this is not? But if it be, oh, what a weight of sin, yea, sin of no common dye, lieth upon us! And doth not the Most High regard it?

"May it not be one of the consequences of this that so many of you are a generation of triflers, triflers with God, with one another, and with your own souls? For how few of you spend, from one week to another, a single hour in private prayer? How few of you have any thought of God in the general tenor of your conversation? Who of you is in any degree acquainted with the work of his Spirit, his supernatural work in the souls of men? Can you hear, unless now and then in a church, any talk of the Holy Spirit? Would you not take it for granted, if one began such a conversation, that it was either hypocrisy or enthusiasm? In the name of the Lord God Almighty, I ask what religion are you of? Even the talk of Christianity, ye cannot, will not bear. Oh, my brethren, what a Christian city is this! It is time for thee, Lord, to lay to thine hand.

"For, indeed, what probability--what possibility rather, speaking after the manner of men--is there that Christianity, Scriptural Christianity, should be again the religion of this place, and that all orders of men among us should speak and live as men filled with the Holy Spirit? By whom should this Christianity be restored? By those of you that are in authority? Are you convinced, then, that this is Scriptural Christianity? Are you desirous it should be restored? Do you count your fortune, liberty, life, not dear unto yourselves so you may be instrumental in restoring of it? But suppose you have the desire, who hath any power proportioned to effect? Perhaps some of you have made a few vain attempts, but with how small success! Shall Christianity, then, be restored by young, unknown, inconsiderable men? I know not whether ye yourselves would suffer it. Would not some of you cry out, 'Young man, in so doing thou reproachest us!' But there is no danger of your being put to the proof; so hath iniquity overspread us like a flood. Whom then shall God send? The famine, the pestilence (God's last messengers to a guilty land), or the sword? the armies of Romish aliens to reform us into our first love? Nay, rather let us fall into thy hand, O Lord; and let us not fall into the hand of man.

"Lord, save, or we perish! Take us out of the mire, that we sink not! Oh, help us against these enemies, for vain is the help of man. Unto thee all things are possible. According to the greatness of thy power, preserve thou those that are appointed to die, and preserve us in the manner that seemeth to thee good; not as we will, but as thou wilt."

The reader will probably agree with me that this is a remarkable sermon, and one of a class that is not frequently heard in University pulpits. What was thought of it in 1744 by the Vice-chancellor, the Heads of Houses, and the Fellows and Tutors of Colleges, we have little means of knowing. In his journal, Wesley only remarks: "I preached this day for the last time, I suppose, at St. Mary's. Be it so. I am now clear of the blood of these men. I have fully delivered my own soul. The beadle came to me afterwards, and told me, 'that the Vice-chancellor had sent him for my notes.' I sent them without delay, not without admiring the wise providence of God. Perhaps few men of note would have given a sermon of mine the reading, if I had put it in their hands. But by this reason it came to be read, probably more than once, by every man of eminence in the University." Many, perhaps, will agree with me that, if Oxford had heard more of such plain preaching during the last one hundred and twenty year; it would have been well for the Church of England.

Turning away from Wesley's preaching, I will now give a specimen of his mind of a very different description. I will give the twelve rules which he laid down for the guidance of his helpers in evangelistic work in the Methodist communion. They serve to illustrate, I think, in a very striking manner, the great shrewdness and good sense of the man, and are also good examples of his terse, pithy style of composition.

He says to his helpers:-

"1. Be diligent. Never be unemployed for a moment; never be triflingly employed. Never while away time; neither spend any more time at any place than is strictly necessary.

"2. Be serious. Let your motto be, Holiness to the Lord. Avoid all lightness, jesting, and foolish talking.

"3. Converse sparingly and cautiously with women, particularly with young women in private.

"4. Take no step towards marriage without first acquainting me with your design.

"5. Believe evil of no one; unless you see it done, take heed how you credit it. Put the best construction on everything: you know the judge is always supposed to be on the prisoner's side.

"6. Speak evil of no one; else your words especially would eat as doth a canker. Keep your thoughts within your own breast till you come to the person concerned.

"7. Tell every one what you think wrong in him, and that plainly, and as soon as may be, else it will fester in your heart. Make all haste to cast the fire out of your bosom.

"8. Do not affect the gentleman. You have no more to do with this character than with that of a dancing-master. A preacher of the gospel is the servant of all.

"9. Be ashamed of nothing but sin; not of fetching wood (if time permit), or of drawing water; not of cleaning your own shoes, or your neighbour's.

"10. Be punctual. Do everything exactly at the time; and, in general, do not mend our rules, but keep them; not for wrath, but for conscience sake.

"11. You have nothing to do but to save souls. Therefore spend and be spent in this work. And go always not to those who want you, but to those who want you most

"12. Act in all things, not according to your own will, but as a son in the gospel. As such, it is your part to employ your time in the manner which we direct, partly in preaching and visiting the flock from house to house; partly in reading, meditation, and prayer. Above all, if you labour with us in the Lord's vineyard, it is needful that you should do that part of the work which we advise, at those times and places which we judge most for his glory."

Comment on these rules is needless. They speak for themselves. Though originally drawn up with a special view to the wants of the Methodist helpers, they contain wisdom for all bodies of Christians. Happy would it be for all the churches of Christ, if all the ministers of the gospel would carry out the spirit of these rules, and remember their wise suggestions far more than they do.

Let us next take an illustration of the manner in which he used to advise his preachers individually. To one who was in danger of becoming a noisy, clamorous preacher, he writes:-

"Scream no more at peril of your soul. God now warns you by me, whom he has set over you. Speak as earnestly as you can, but do not scream. Speak with all your heart, but with a moderate voice. It was said of our Lord, 'He shall not cry.' The word means properly, he shall not scream. Herein be a follower of me, as I am of Christ. I often speak loud, often vehemently; but I never scream; I never strain myself; I dare not; I know it would be a sin against God and my own soul."

To one who neglected the duty of private reading and regular study, he wrote as follows:-

"Hence your talent in preaching does not increase; it is just the same as it was seven years ago. It is lively, but not deep; there is little variety; there is no compass of thought. Reading only can supply this, with daily meditation and daily prayer. You wrong yourself greatly by omitting this; you never can be a deep preacher without it, any more than a thorough Christian. Oh begin! Fix some part of every day for private exercises. You may acquire the taste which you have not; what is tedious at first will afterwards be pleasant. Whether you like it or not, read and pray daily. It is for your life! There is no other way; else you will be a trifler all your days, and a pretty superficial preacher. Do justice to your own soul; give it time and means to grow: do not starve yourself any longer."

The last specimen of John Wesley's mind that I will ~ is an extract from a letter which he wrote to the Bishop of Lincoln, by way of public protest, on account of the disgraceful persecution which some intolerant magistrates carried on against the Lincolnshire Methodists. It is an interesting letter, not only on account of the holy boldness of its style, but also on account of the age of the writer. He says:--

"My Lord, I am a dying man, having already one foot in the grave. Humanly speaking, I cannot long creep upon the earth, being now nearer ninety than eighty years of age. But I cannot die in peace before I have discharged this office of Christian love to your Lordship. I write without ceremony, as neither hoping nor fearing anything from your Lordship or from any man living. And I ask, in the name and in the presence of Him, to whom both you and I are shortly to give an account, why do you trouble those that are quiet in the land, those that fear God and work righteousness? Does your Lordship know what the Methodists are--that many thousands of them are zealous members of the Church of England, and strongly attached, not only to His Majesty, but to his present ministry? Why should your Lordship, setting religion out of the question, throw away such a body of respectable friends? Is it for their religious sentiments? Alas, my Lord, is this a time to persecute any man for conscience sake? I beseech you, my Lord, do as you would be done to. You are a man of sense; you are a man of learning; nay, I verily believe (what is of infinitely more value), you are a man of piety. Then think, and let think. I pray God to bless you with the choicest of his blessings."

With this letter I conclude my illustrations of John Wesley's mind and its working. It would be easy to add to the extracts I have given from the large stock of materials which are still within reach of all who choose to look for them. But there is such a thing as overloading a subject, and injuring it by over-quotation. I believe I have said enough to supply my readers with the means of forming a judgement of John Wesley's mental calibre.

Has any one been accustomed to regard the father of Methodism as a mere fanatic, as a man of moderate abilities and superficial education, as a successful popular preacher and; leader of an ignorant sect, but nothing more? I ask such an one to examine carefully the specimens I have given of Wesley's mind, and to reconsider his opinion. Whether men like Methodist doctrine or not, I think they must honestly concede that the old Fellow of Lincoln was a scholar and a sensible man. The world, which always sneers at evangelical religion, may please itself by saying that the men who shook England a hundred years ago were weak-minded, hot-headed enthusiasts, and unlearned and ignorant men. The Jews said the same of the apostles in early days. But the world cannot get over facts. The founder of Methodism was a man of no mean reputation in Oxford, and his writings show him to have been a well-read, logical-minded, and intelligent man. Let the children of this world deny this if they can.

Finally, has any one been accustomed to regard Wesley with dislike on account of his Arminian opinions? Is any one in the habit of turning away from his name with prejudice, and refusing to believe that such an imperfect preacher of the gospel could do any good? I ask such an one to remould his opinion, to take a more kindly view of the old soldier of the cross, and to give him the honour he deserves.

What though John Wesley did not use all the weapons of truth which our great Captain has provided? What though he often said things which you and I feel we could not say, and left unsaid things which we feel ought to be said? Still, notwithstanding this, he was a bold fighter on Christ's side, a fearless warrior against sin, the world, and the devil, and an unflinching adherent of the Lord Jesus Christ in a very dark day. He honoured the Bible. He cried down sin. He made much of Christ's blood. He exalted holiness. He taught the absolute need of repentance, faith, and conversion. Surely these things ought not to he forgotten. Surely there is a deep lesson in those words of our Master, "Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me. For he that is not against us is on our part" (Mark ix. 39, 40).

Then let us thank God for what John Wesley was, and not keep poring over his deficiencies, and only talking of what he was not. Whether we like it or not, John Wesley was a mighty instrument in God's hand for good; and, next to George Whitefield, was the first and foremost evangelist of England a hundred years ago.

George Whitefield

CHAPTER 1

Who were the men that revived religion in England a hundred years ago? What were their names, that we may do them honour? Where were they born? How were they educated? What are the leading facts in their lives? What was their special department of labour? To these questions I wish to supply some answers in the present and future chapters.

I pity the man who takes no interest in such inquiries. The instruments that God employs to do His work in the world deserve a close inspection. The man who did not care to look at the rams" horns that blew down Jericho, the hammer and nail that slew Sisera, the lamps and trumpets of Gideon, the sling and stone of David, might fairly be set down as a cold and heartless person. I trust that all who read this volume will like to know something about the English evangelists of the eighteenth century.

The first and foremost whom I will name is the well-known George Whitefield. Though not the first in order, if we look at the date of his birth, I place him first in the order of merit, without any hesitation. Of all the spiritual heroes of a hundred years ago, none saw so soon as Whitefield what the times demanded, and none were so forward in the great work of spiritual aggression. I should think I committed an act of injustice if I placed any name before his.

Whitefield was born at Gloucester in the year 1714. That venerable county-town, which was his birth-place, is connected with more than one name which ought to be dear to every lover of Protestant truth. Tyndal, one of the first and ablest translators of the English Bible, was a Gloucestershire man. Hooper, one of the greatest and best of our English reformers, was Bishop of Gloucester, and was burned at the stake for Christ's truth, within view of his own cathedral, in Queen Mary's reign. In the next century Miles Smith, Bishop of Gloucester, was one of the first to protest against the Romanizing proceedings of Laud, who was then Dean of Gloucester. In fact, he carried his Protestant feeling so far that, when Laud moved the communion-table in the cathedral to the east end, and placed it for the first time "altar-wise," in 1616, Bishop Smith was so much offended that he refused to enter the walls of the cathedral from that day till his death. Places like Gloucester, we need not doubt, have a rich entailed inheritance of many prayers. The city where Hooper preached and prayed, and where the zealous Miles Smith protested, was the place where the greatest preacher of the gospel England has ever seen was born.

Like many other famous men, Whitefield was of humble origin, and had no rich or noble connections to help him forward in the world. His mother kept the Bell Inn at Gloucester, and appears not to have prospered in business; at any rate, she never seems to have been able to do anything for Whitefield's advancement in life. The inn itself is still standing, and is reputed to be the birth-place, not only of our greatest English preacher, but also of a well-known English prelate Henry Philpot, Bishop of Exeter.

Whitefield's early life, according to his own account, was anything but religious; though, like many boys, he had occasional prickings of conscience and spasmodic fits of devout feeling. But habits and general tastes are the only true test of young people's characters. He confesses that he was "addicted to lying, filthy talking, and foolish jesting", and that he was a 'sabbath-breaker, a theater-goer, a card-player, and a romance reader". All this, he says, went on till he was fifteen years old.

Poor as he was, his residence at Gloucester procured him the advantage of a good education at the Free Grammar School of that city. Here he was a day-scholar until he was fifteen. Nothing is known of his progress there. He can hardly, however, have been quite idle, or else he would not have been ready to enter an University afterwards at the age of eighteen. His letters, moreover, show an acquaintance with Latin, in the shape of frequent quotations, which is seldom acquired, if not picked up at school. The only known fact about his schooldays is this curious one, that even then he was remarkable for his good elocution and memory, and was selected to recite speeches before the Corporation of Gloucester at their annual visitation of the Grammar School.

At the age of fifteen Whitefield appears to have left school, and to have given up Latin and Greek for a season. In all probability, his mother's straitened circumstances made it absolutely necessary for him to do something to assist her in business and to get his own living. He began, therefore, to help her in the daily work of the Bell Inn. "At length", he says, "I put on my blue apron, washed cups, cleaned rooms, and, in one word, became a professed common drawer for nigh a year and a half."

This state of things, however, did not last long. His mother's business at the Bell did not flourish, and she finally retired from it altogether. An old school-fellow revived in his mind the idea of going to Oxford, and he went back to the Grammar School and renewed his studies. Friends were raised up who made interest for him at Pembroke College, Oxford, where the Grammar School of Gloucester held two exhibitions. And at length, after several providential circumstances had smoothed the way, he entered Oxford as a servitor at Pembroke at the age of eighteen.

(Editor's note: Happening to be at Oxford in June 1865, I went to Pembroke College, and asked whether any one knew the rooms which Whitefield occupied when he was at Oxford. The porter informed me that nothing whatever was known about them. The rooms which the famous Dr. Johnson occupied at Pembroke are still pointed out. Johnson left Oxford just before Whitefield went up.

Whitefield's residence at Oxford was the great turning-point in his life. For two or three years before he went to the University his journal tells us that he had not been without religious convictions. But from the time of his entering Pembroke College these convictions fast ripened into decided Christianity. He diligently attended all means of grace within his reach. He spent his leisure time in visiting the city prison, reading to the prisoners, and trying to do good. He became acquainted with the famous John Wesley and his brother Charles, and a little band of like-minded young men, including the well-known author of Theron and Aspasio, James Hervey. These were the devoted party to whom the name "Methodists" was first applied, on account of their strict "method" of living. At one time he seems to have greedily devoured such books as Thomas Kempis, and Castanuza's Spiritual Combat, and to have been in danger of becoming a semi-papist, an ascetic, or a mystic, and of placing the whole of religion in self-denial. He says in his Journal, I always chose the worst sort of food. I fasted twice a week. My apparel was mean. I thought it unbecoming a penitent to have his hair powdered. I wore woollen gloves, a patched gown, and dirty shoes; and though I was convinced that the kingdom of God did not consist in meat and drink, yet I resolutely persisted in these voluntary acts of self-denial, because I found in them great promotion of the spiritual life." Out of all this darkness he was gradually delivered, partly by the advice of one or two experienced Christians, and partly by reading such books as Scougal's Life of God in the Soul of Man, Law's Serious Call, Baxter's Call to the Unconverted, Alleine's Alarm to Unconverted Sinners, and Matthew Henry's Commentary. "Above all," he says, "my mind being now more opened and enlarged, I began to read the Holy Scriptures upon my knees, laying aside all other books, and praying over, if possible, every line and word. This proved meat indeed and drink indeed to my soul. I daily received fresh life, light, and power from above. I got more true knowledge from reading the Book of God in one month than I could ever have acquired from all the writings of men." Once taught to understand the glorious liberty of Christ's gospel, Whitefield never turned again to asceticism, legalism, mysticism, or strange views of Christian perfection. The experience received by bitter conflict was most valuable to him. The doctrines of free grace, once thoroughly grasped, took deep root in his heart, and became, as it were, bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh. Of all the little band of Oxford methodists, none seem to have got hold so soon of clear views of Christ's gospel as he did, and none kept it so unwaveringly to the end.

At the early age of twenty-two Whitefield was admitted to holy orders by Bishop Benson of Gloucester, on Trinity Sunday, 1736. His ordination was not of his own seeking. The bishop heard of his character from Lady Selwyn and others, sent for him, gave him five guineas to buy books, and offered to ordain him, though only twenty-two years old, whenever he wished. This unexpected offer came to him when he was full of scruples about his own fitness for the ministry. It cut the knot and brought him to the point of decision. "I began to think," he says, "that if I held out longer I should fight against God."

Whitefield's first sermon was preached in the very town where he was born, at the church of St. Mary-le-Crypt, Gloucester. His own description of it is the best account that can be given:- "Last Sunday, in the afternoon, I preached my first sermon in the church of St. Mary-le-Crypt, where I was baptized, and also first received the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Curiosity, as you may easily guess, drew a large congregation together upon this occasion. The sight at first a little awed me. But I was comforted with a heartfelt sense of the divine presence, and soon found the unspeakable advantage of having been accustomed to public speaking when a boy at school, and of exhorting the prisoners and poor people at their private houses while at the university. By these means I was kept from being daunted overmuch. As I proceeded I perceived the fire kindled, till at last, though so young and amidst a crowd of those who knew me in my childish days, I trust I was enabled to speak with some degree of gospel authority. Some few mocked, but most seemed for the present struck; and I have since heard that a complaint was made to the bishop that I drove fifteen mad the first sermon! The worthy prelate wished that the madness might not be forgotten before next Sunday."

Almost immediately after his ordination, Whitefield went to Oxford and took his degree as Bachelor of Arts. He then commenced his regular ministerial life by undertaking temporary duty at the Tower Chapel, London, for two months. While engaged there he preached continually in many London churches; and among others, in the parish churches of Islington, Bishopsgate, St Dunstan's, St Margaret's, Westminster, and Bow, Cheapside. From the very first he obtained a degree of popularity such as no preacher, before or since, has probably ever reached. Whether on week-days or Sundays, wherever he preached, the churches were crowded, and an immense sensation was produced. The plain truth is, that a really eloquent, extempore preacher, preaching the pure gospel with most uncommon gifts of voice and manner, was at that time an entire novelty in London. The congregations were taken by surprise and carried by storm.

From London he removed for two months to Dummer, a little rural parish in Hampshire, near Basingstoke. This was a totally new sphere of action, and he seemed like a man buried alive among poor illiterate people. But he was soon reconciled to it, and thought afterwards that he reaped much profit by conversing with the poor. From Dummer he accepted an invitation, which had been much pressed on him by the Wesleys, to visit the colony of Georgia in North America, and assist in the care of an Orphan House which had been set up near Savannah for the children of colonists. After preaching for a few months in Gloucestershire, and especially at Bristol and Stonehouse, he sailed for America in the latter part of 1737, and continued there about a year. The affairs of this Orphan House, it may be remarked, occupied much of his attention from this period of his life till he died. Though well-meant, it seems to have been a design of very questionable wisdom, and certainly entailed on Whitefield a world of anxiety and responsibility to the end of his days.

Whitefield returned from Georgia in the latter part of the year 1738, partly to obtain priest's orders. Which were conferred on him by his old friend, Bishop Benson, and partly on business connected with the Orphan House. He soon, however, discovered that his position was no longer what it was before he sailed for Georgia. The bulk of the clergy were no longer favourable to him, and regarded him with suspicion as an enthusiast and a fanatic. They were especially scandalized by his preaching the doctrine of regeneration or the new birth, as a thing which many baptized persons greatly needed! The number of pulpits to which he had access rapidly diminished. Church wardens, who had no eyes for drunkenness and impurity, were filled with intense indignation about what they called "breaches of order". Bishops who could tolerate Arianism, Socinianism, and Deism, were filled with indignation at a man who declared fully the atonement of Christ and the work of the Holy Ghost, and began to denounce him openly. In short, from this period of his life, Whitefield's field of usefulness within the Church of England narrowed rapidly on every side.

The step which at this juncture gave a turn to the whole current of Whitefield's ministry was his adoption of the system of open- air preaching. Seeing that thousands everywhere would attend no place of worship, spent their Sundays in idleness or sin, and were not to be reached by sermons within walls, he resolved, in the spirit of holy aggression, to go out after them "into the highways and hedges," on his Master's principle, and "compel them to come in." His first attempt to do this was among the colliers at Kingswood near Bristol, in February, 1739. After much prayer he one day went to Hannam Mount, and standing upon a hill began to preach to about a hundred colliers upon Matthew 5:1-3. The thing soon became known. The number of hearers rapidly increased, till the congregation amounted to many thousands. His own account of the behaviour of these neglected colliers, who had never been in a church in their lives, is deeply affecting:- "Having," he writes to a friend, "no righteousness of their own to renounce, they were glad to hear of a Jesus who was a friend to publicans, and came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance. The first discovery of their being affected was the sight of the white gutters made by their tears, which plentifully fell down their black cheeks as they came out of their coal-pits. Hundreds of them were soon brought under deep conviction, which, as the event proved, happily ended in a sound and thorough conversion. The change was visible to all, though numbers chose to impute it to anything rather than the finger of God. As the scene was quite new, it often occasioned many inward conflicts. Sometimes, when twenty thousand people were before me, I had not in my own apprehension a word to say either to God or them. But I was never totally deserted, and frequently (for to deny it would be lying against God) was so assisted that I knew by happy experience what our Lord meant by saying, "Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." The open firmament above me, the prospect of the adjacent fields, with the sight of thousands, some in coaches, some on horseback, and some in the trees, and at times all affected and in tears, was almost too much for, and quite overcame me."

Two months after this Whitefield began the practice of open-air preaching in London, on April 27, 1739. The circumstances under which this happened were curious. He had gone to Islington to preach for the vicar, his friend Mr. Stonehouse. In the midst of the prayer the churchwardens came to him and demanded his licence for preaching in the diocese of London. Whitefield, of course, had not got this licence any more than any clergyman not regularly officiating in the diocese has at this day. The upshot of the matter was, that being forbidden by the churchwardens to preach in the pulpit, he went outside after the communion-service, and preached in the churchyard. "And," says he, "God was pleased to assist me in preaching, and so wonderfully to affect the hearers, that I believe we could have gone singing hymns to prison. Let not the adversaries say, I have thrust myself out of their synagogues. No; they have thrust me out."

From that day forward he became a constant field-preacher, whenever weather and the season of the year made it possible. Two days afterwards on Sunday, April 29th, he records:- "I preached in Moorfields to an exceeding great multitude. Being weakened by my morning's preaching, I refreshed myself in the afternoon by a little sleep, and at five went and preached at Kennington Common, about two miles from London, when no less that thirty thousand people were supposed to be present." Henceforth, wherever there were large open spaces round London, wherever there were large bands of idle, godless, Sabbath-breaking people gathered together, in Hackney Fields, Mary-le-bonne Fields, May Fair, Smithfield, Blackheath, Moorfields, and Kennington Common, there went Whitefield and lifted up his voice for Christ.

Editors note: The reader will remember that all this happened when London was comparatively a small place. Most of the open places where Whitefield preached are now covered with buildings. Kennington Oval and Blackheath alone remain open at this day.

The gospel so proclaimed was listened to and greedily received by hundreds who never dreamed of going to a place of worship. The cause of pure religion was advanced, and souls were plucked from the hand of Satan, like brands from the burning. But it was going much too fast for the Church of those days. The clergy, with a few honourable exceptions, refused entirely to countenance this strange preacher. In the true spirit of the dog in the manger, they neither liked to go after the semi-heathen masses of population themselves, nor liked any one else to do the work for them. The consequence was, that the ministrations of Whitefield in the pulpits of the Church of England from this time almost entirely ceased. He loved the Church in which he had been ordained; he gloried in her Articles; he used her Prayer-book with pleasure. But the Church did not love him, and so lost the use of his services. The plain truth is, that the Church of England of that day was not ready for a man like Whitefield. The Church was too much asleep to understand him, and was vexed at a man who would not keep still and let the devil alone.

The facts of Whitefield's history from this period to the day of his death are almost entirely of one complexion. One year was just like another; and to attempt to follow him would be only going repeatedly over the same ground. From 1739 to the year of his death, 1770, a period of thirty-one years, his life was one uniform employment. He was eminently a man of one thing, and always about his Master's business. From Sunday mornings to Saturday nights, from the 1st of January to the 31st of December, excepting when laid aside by illness, he was almost incessantly preaching Christ and going about the world entreating men to repent and come to Christ and be saved. There was hardly a considerable town in England, Scotland, or Wales, that he did not visit as an evangelist. When churches were opened to him he gladly preached in churches; when only chapels could be obtained, he cheerfully preached in chapels. When churches and chapels alike were closed, or were too small to contain his hearers, he was ready and willing to preach in the open air. For thirty-one years he laboured in this way, always proclaiming the same glorious gospel, and always, as far as man's eye can judge, with immense effect. In one single Whitsuntide week, after preaching in Moorfields, he received one thousand letters from people under spiritual concern, and admitted to the Lord's table three hundred and fifty persons. In the thirty-four years of his ministry it is reckoned that he preached publicly eighteen thousand times.

His journeyings were prodigious, when the roads and conveyances of his time are considered. He was familiar with "perils in the wilderness and perils in the seas", if ever man was in modern times. He visited Scotland fourteen times, and was nowhere more acceptable or useful than he was in that Bible-loving country. He crossed the Atlantic seven times, backward and forward, in miserable slow sailing ships, and arrested the attention of thousands in Boston, New York, and Philadelphia. He went over to Ireland twice, and on one occasion was almost murdered by an ignorant Popish mob in Dublin. As to England and Wales, he traversed every country in them, from the Isle of Wight to Berwick-on-Tweed, and from the Land's End to the North Foreland.

His regular ministerial work in London for the winter season, when field-preaching was necessarily suspended, was something prodigious. His weekly engagements at the Tabernacle in Tottenham Court Road, which was built for him when the pulpits of the

Established Church were closed, comprised the following work:- Every Sunday morning, he administered the Lord's Supper to several hundred communicants at half-past six. After this he read prayers, and preached both morning and afternoon. Then he preached again in the evening at half-past five, and concluded by addressing a large society of widows, married people, young men and spinsters, all sitting separately in the area of the Tabernacle, with exhortations suitable to their respective stations. On Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday mornings, he preached regularly at six. On Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Saturday evenings, he delivered lectures. This, it will be observed, made thirteen sermons a week! And all this time he was carrying on a large correspondence with people in almost every part of the world.

That any human frame could so long endure the labours that Whitefield went through does indeed seem wonderful. That his life was not cut short by violence, to which he was frequently exposed, is no less wonderful. But he was immortal till his work was done. He died at last very suddenly at Newbury Port, in North America, on Sunday, September 29th, 1770, at the comparatively early age of fifty-six. He was once married to a widow named James, of Abergavenny, who died before him. If we may judge from the little mention made of his wife in his letters, his marriage does not seem to have contributed much to his happiness. He left no children, but he left a name far better than that of sons and daughters. Never perhaps was there a man of whom it could be so truly said that he spent and was spent for Christ than George Whitefield.

The circumstances and particulars of this great evangelist's end are so deeply interesting, that I shall make no excuse for dwelling on them. It was an end in striking harmony with the tenor of his life. As he had lived for more than thirty years, so he died, preaching to the very last. He literally almost died in harness. "sudden death", he had often said, "is sudden glory. Whether right or not, I cannot help wishing that I may go off in the same manner. To me it would be worse than death to live to be nursed, and to see friends weeping about me." He had the desire of his heart granted. He was cut down in a single night by a spasmodic fit of asthma, almost before his friends knew that he was ill.

On the morning of Saturday, September 29th, the day before he died, Whitefield set out on horseback from Portsmouth in New Hampshire, in order to fulfil an engagement to preach at Newbury Port on Sunday. On the way, unfortunately, he was earnestly importuned to preach at a place called Exeter, and though feeling very ill, he had not the heart to refuse. A friend remarked before he preached that he looked more uneasy than usual, and said to him, 'Sir, you are more fit to go to bed than to preach." To this Whitefield replied: "True, sir"; and then turning aside, he clasped his hands together, and looking up, said: "Lord Jesus, I am weary in thy work, but not of thy work. If I have not yet finished my course, let me go and speak for thee once more in the fields, seal thy truth, and come home and die." He then went and preached to a very great multitude in the fields from the text 2 Corinthians 13:5, for the space of nearly two hours. It was his last sermon, and a fitting conclusion to his whole career.

An eye-witness has given the following striking account of this closing scene of Whitefield's life:- "He rose from his seat, and stood erect. His appearance alone was a powerful sermon. The thinness of his visage, the paleness of his countenance, the evident struggling of the heavenly spark in a decayed body for utterance, were all deeply interesting; the spirit was willing, but the flesh was dying. In this situation he remained several minutes, unable to speak. He then said: "I will wait for the gracious assistance of God, for He will, I am certain, assist me once more to speak in his name." He then delivered perhaps one of his best sermons. The latter part contained the following passage: 'I go; I go to a rest prepared: my sun has given light to many, but now it is about to set - no, to rise to the zenith of immortal glory. I have outlived many on earth, but they cannot outlive me in heaven. Many shall outlive me on earth and live when this body is no more, but there - oh, thought divine! - I shall be in a world where time, age, sickness, and sorrow are unknown. My body fails, but my spirit expands. How willingly would I live for ever to preach Christ. But I die to be with him. How brief - comparatively brief - has been my life compared to the vast labours which I see before me yet to be accomplished. But if I leave now, while so few care about heavenly things, the God of peace will surely visit you.'"

After the sermon was over, Whitefield dined with a friend, and then rode on to Newbury Port, though greatly fatigued. On arriving there he supped early, and retired to bed. Tradition says, that as he went up-stairs, with a lighted candle in his hand, he could not resist the inclination to turn around at the head of the stair, and speak to the friends who were assembled to meet him. As he spoke the fire kindled within him, and before he could conclude, the candle which he held in has hand had actually burned down to the socket. He retired to his bedroom, to come out no more alive. A violent fit of spasmodic asthma seized him soon after he got into bed, and before six o"clock the next morning the great preacher was dead. If ever man was ready for his change, Whitefield was that man. When his time came, he had nothing to do but die. Where he died there he was buried, in a vault beneath the pulpit of the church where he had engaged to preach; His sepulchre is shown to this very day; and nothing makes the little town where he died so famous as the fact that it contains the bones of George Whitefield.

Such are the leading facts in the life of the prince of English evangelists of a hundred years ago. His personal character, the real extent of his usefulness, and some account of his style of preaching, are subjects which I must reserve for another chapter.

CHAPTER 2

GEORGE WHITEFIELD, in my judgment, was so entirely chief and first among the English Reformers of the last century, that I make no apology for offering some further information about him. The real amount of good he did, the peculiar character of his preaching, the private character of the man, are all points that deserve consideration. They are points, I may add, about which there is a vast amount of misconception.

This misconception perhaps is unavoidable, and ought not to surprise us. The materials for forming a correct opinion about such a man as Whitefield are necessarily very scanty. He wrote no book for the million, of world-wide fame, like Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress." He headed no crusade against an apostate Church, with a nation at his back, and princes on his side, like Martin Luther. He founded no religious denomination, which pinned its faith on his writings and carefully embalmed his best acts and words, like John Wesley. There are Lutherans and Wesleyans in the present day, but there are no Whitefieldites. No! The great evangelist of last century was a simple, guileless man, who lived for one thing only, and that was to preach Christ. If he did that, he cared for nothing else. The records of such a man are large and full in heaven, I have no doubt. But they are few and scanty upon earth.

We must not forget, beside this, that the many in every age see nothing in a man like Whitefield but fanaticism and enthusiasm. They abhor everything like "zeal" in religion. They dislike every one who turns the world upside down, and departs from old traditional ways, and will not let the devil alone. Such persons, no doubt, would tell us that the ministry of Whitefield only produced temporary excitement, that his preaching was common- place rant, and that his character had nothing about it to be specially admired. It may be feared that eighteen hundred years ago they would have said much the same of St. Paul.

The question, "What good did Whitefield do?" is one which I answer without the least hesitation. I believe that the direct good which he did to immortal souls was enormous. I will go further,-I believe it is incalculable. Credible witnesses in England, Scotland, and America, have placed on record their conviction that he was the means of converting thousands of people. Many, wherever he preached, were not merely pleased, excited, and arrested, but positively turned from sin, and made thorough servants of God. "Numbering the people", I do not forget, is at all times an objectionable practice. God alone can read hearts and discern the wheat from the tares. Many, no doubt, in days of religious excitement, are set down as converted who are not converted at all. But I wish my readers to understand that my high estimate of Whitefield's usefulness is based on a solid foundation. I ask them to mark well what Whitefield's contemporaries thought of the value of his labours.

Franklin, the well-known American philosopher, was a cold-blooded, calculating man, a Quaker by profession, and not likely to form too high an estimate of any minister's work. Yet even he confessed that "it was wonderful to see the change soon made by his preaching in the manners of the inhabitants of Philadelphia. From being thoughtless or indifferent about religion, it seemed as if all the world were growing religious." Franklin himself, it may be remarked, was the leading printer of religious works at Philadelphia; and his readiness to print Whitefield's sermons and journals shows his judgment of the hold that he had on the American mind.

Maclaurin, Willison, and Macculloch, were Scotch ministers whose names are well known north of the Tweed, and the two former of whom deservedly rank high as theological writers. All these have repeatedly testified that Whitefield was made an instrument of doing immense good in Scotland. Willison in particular says, "that God honoured him with surprising success among sinners of all ranks and persuasions".

Old Henry Venn, of Huddersfield and Yelling, was a man of strong good sense, as well as of great grace. His opinion was, that "if the greatness, extent, success, and disinterestedness of a man's labours can give him distinction among the children of Christ, then we are warranted to affirm that scarce any one has equalled Mr. Whitefield". Again he says: "He was abundantly successful in his vast labours. The seals of his ministry, from first to last, I am persuaded, were more than could be credited could the number be fixed. This is certain, his amazing popularity was only from his usefulness; for he no sooner opened his mouth as a preacher, than God commanded an extraordinary blessing upon his word."

John Newton was a shrewd man, as well as an eminent minister of the gospel. His testimony is: "That which finished Mr. Whitefield's character as a shining light, and is now his crown of rejoicing, was the singular success which the Lord was pleased to give him in winning souls. It seemed as if he never preached in vain. Perhaps there is hardly a place in all the extensive compass of his labours where some may not yet be found who thankfully acknowledge him as their spiritual father."

John Wesley did not agree with Whitefield on several theological points of no small importance. But when he preached his funeral sermon, he said: "Have we read or heard of any person who called so many thousands, so many myriads of sinners to repentance? Above all, have we read or heard of any one who has been the blessed instrument of bringing so many sinners from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God?"

Valuable as these testimonies undoubtedly are, there is one point which they leave totally untouched. That point is the quantity of indirect good that Whitefield did. Great as the direct effects of his labours were, I believe firmly that the indirect effects were even greater. His ministry was made a blessing to thousands who never perhaps either saw or heard him.

He was among the first in the eighteenth century who revived attention to the old truths which produced the Protestant Reformation. His constant assertion of the doctrines taught by the Reformers, his repeated reference to the Articles and Homilies, and the divinity of the best English theologians, obliged many to think, and roused them to examine their own principles. If the whole truth was known, I believe it would prove that the rise and progress of the Evangelical body in the Church of England received a mighty impulse from George Whitefield.

But this is not the only indirect good that Whitefield did in his day. He was among the first to show the right way to meet the attacks of infidels and sceptics on Christianity. He saw clearly that the most powerful weapon against such men is not cold, metaphysical reasoning and dry critical disquisition, but preaching the whole gospel - living the whole gospel - and spreading the whole gospel. It was not the writings of Leland, and the younger Sherlock, and Waterland, and Leslie, that rolled back the flood of infidelity one half so much as the preaching of Whitefield and his companions. They were the men who were the true champions of Christianity. Infidels are seldom shaken by a mere abstract reasoning. The surest argument against them are gospel truth and gospel life.

Above all, he was the very first Englishman who seems to have thoroughly understood what Dr. Chalmers aptly called the aggressive system. He was the first to see that Christ's ministers must do the work of fishermen. They must not wait for souls to come to them, but must go after souls, and "compel them to come in". He did not sit tamely by his fire side, like a cat in a rainy day, mourning over the wickedness of the land. He went forth to beard the devil in his high places. He attacked sin and wickedness face to face, and gave them no peace. He dived into holes and corners after sinners. He hunted out ignorance and vice wherever they could be found. In short, he set on foot a system of action which, up to his time, had been comparatively unknown in this country, but a system which, once commenced, has never ceased to be employed down to the present day. City missions, town missions, district visiting societies, open-air preachings, home missions, special services, theatre preachings, are all evidences that the value of the "aggressive system" is now thoroughly recognized by all the Churches. We understand better how to go to work now than we did a hundred years ago. But let us never forget that the first man to commence operations of this kind was George Whitefield, and let us give him the credit he

deserves.

The peculiar character of Whitefield's preaching is the subject which next demands some consideration. Men naturally wish to know what was the secret of his unparalleled success. The subject is one surrounded with considerable difficulty, and it is no easy matter to form a correct judgment about it. The common idea of many people, that he was a mere common-place ranting Methodist, remarkable for nothing but great fluency, strong doctrine, and a loud voice, will not bear a moment's investigation. Dr. Johnson was foolish enough to say, that "he vociferated and made an impression, but never drew as much attention as a mountebank does; and that he did not draw attention by doing better than others, but by doing what was strange". But Johnson was anything but infallible when he began to talk about ministers and religion. Such a theory will not hold water. It is contradictory to undeniable facts.

It is a fact that no preacher in England has ever succeeded in arresting the attention of such crowds as Whitefield constantly addressed around London. No preacher has ever been so universally popular in every country that he visited, in England, Scotland and America. No preacher has ever retained his hold on his hearers so entirely as he did for thirty-four years. His popularity never waned. It was as great at the end of his day as it was at the beginning. Wherever he preached, men would leave their workshop and employments to gather round him, and hear like those who heard for eternity. This of itself is a great fact. To command the ear of "the masses" for a quarter of a century, and to be preaching incessantly the whole time, is an evidence of no common power.

It is another fact that Whitefield's preaching produced a powerful effect on people in every rank of life. He won the admiration of high as well as low, of rich as well as poor, of learned as well as unlearned. if his preaching had been popular with none but the uneducated and the poor, we might have thought it possible that there was little in it but declamation and noise. But, so far from this being the case, he seems to have been acceptable to numbers of the nobility and gentry. The Marquis of Lothian, the Earl of Leven, the Earl of Buchan, Lord Rae, Lord Dartmouth, Lord James A. Gordon, might be named among his warmest admirers, beside Lady Huntingdon and a host of ladies.

It is a fact that eminent critics and literary men, like Lord Bolingbroke and Lord Chesterfield, were frequently his delighted hearers. Even the cold artificial Chesterfield was known to warm under Whitefield's eloquence. Bolingbroke said, "He is the most extraordinary man in our times. He has the most commanding eloquence I ever heard in any person." Franklin the philosopher spoke in no measured terms of his preaching powers. Hume the historian declared that it was worth going twenty miles to hear him.

Now, facts like these can never be explained away. They completely upset the theory that Whitefield's preaching was nothing but noise and rant. Bolingbroke, Chesterfield, Hume, and Franklin, were not men to be easily deceived. They were no mean judges of eloquence. They were probably among the best qualified critics of their day. Their unbought and unbiased opinions appear to me to supply unanswerable proof that there must have been something very extraordinary about Whitefield's preaching. But still, after all, the question remains to be answered, What was the secret of Whitefield's unrivalled popularity and effectiveness? And I frankly admit that, with the scanty materials we possess for forming our judgement, the question is a very hard one to answer.

The man who turns to the seventy-five sermons published under Whitefield's name will probably be much disappointed. He will see in them no commanding intellect or grasp of mind. He will find in them no deep philosophy, and no very striking thoughts. It is only fair, however, to say, that by far the greater part of these sermons were taken down in shorthand by reporters, and published without correction. These worthy men appear to have done their work very indifferently, and were evidently ignorant alike of stopping and paragraphing, of grammar and of gospel. The consequence is, that many passages in these seventy-five sermons are what Bishop Latimer would have called a "mingle-mangle," and what we call in this day "a complete mess." No wonder that poor Whitefield says, in one of his last letters, dated September 26, 1769, "I wish you had advertised against the publication of my last sermon. It is not verbatim as I delivered it. In some places it makes me speak false concord, and even nonsense. In others the sense and connection are destroyed by injudicious, disjointed paragraphs, and the whole is entirely unfit for the public review."

I venture, however, to say boldly that, with all their faults, Whitefield's printed sermons will well repay a candid perusal. The reader must recollect that they were not carefully prepared for the press, like the sermons of Melville or Bradley, but wretchedly reported, paragraphed, and stopped, and he must read with this continually before his mind. Moreover, he must remember that English composition for speaking to hearers, and English composition for private reading, are almost like two different languages, so that sermons which "preach" well "read" badly. Let him, I say, remember these two things, and judge accordingly, and I am much mistaken if he does not find much to admire in many of Whitefield's sermons. For my own part, I must plainly say that I think they are greatly underrated.

Let me now point out what appear to have been the distinctive characteristics of Whitefield's preaching.

For one thing, Whitefield preached a singularly pure gospel. Few men, perhaps, ever gave their hearers so much wheat and so little chaff. He did not get up to talk about his party, his cause, his interest or his office. He was perpetually telling you about your sins, your heart, Jesus Christ, the Holy Ghost, the absolute need of repentance, faith, and holiness, in the way that the Bible presents these mighty subjects. "Oh, the righteousness of Jesus Christ!" he would often say: "I must be excused if I mention it in almost all my sermons." Preaching of this kind is the preaching that God delights to honour. It must be pre-eminently a manifestation of truth.

For another thing, Whitefield's preaching was singularly lucid and simple. His hearers, whatever they might think of his doctrine, could never fail to understand what he meant. His style of speaking was easy, plain, and conversational. He seemed to abhor long and involved sentences. He always saw his mark, and went directly at it. He seldom troubled his hearers with abstruse argument and intricate reasoning. Simple Bible statements, apt illustrations, and pertinent anecdotes, were the more common weapons that he used. The consequence was that his hearers always understood him. He never shot above their heads. Here again is one grand element of a preacher's success. He must labour by all means to be understood. It was a wise saying of Archbishop Usher, "To make easy things seem hard is every man's work; but to make hard things easy is the work of a great preacher".

For another thing, Whitefield was a singularly bold and direct preacher. He never used that indefinite expression "we", which seems so

peculiar to English pulpit oratory, and which only leaves a hearer's mind in a state of misty confusion. He met men face to face, like one who had a message from God to them, "I have come here to speak to you about your soul". The result was that many of his hearers used often to think that his sermons were specially meant for themselves. He was not content, as many, with sticking on a meagre tail-piece of application at the end of a long discourse. On the contrary, a constant vein of application ran through all his sermons. "This is for you, and this is for you." His hearers were never let alone.

Another striking feature in Whitefield's preaching was his singular power of description. The Arabians have a proverb which says, "He is the best orator who can turn men's ears into eyes". Whitefield seems to have had a peculiar faculty of doing this. He dramatized his subject so thoroughly that it seemed to move and walk before your eyes. He used to draw such vivid pictures of the things he was handling, that his hearers could believe they actually saw and heard them. "On one occasion", says one of his biographers, "Lord Chesterfield was among his hearers. The great preacher, in describing the miserable condition of an unconverted sinner, illustrated the subject by describing a blind beggar. The night was dark, and the road dangerous. The poor mendicant was deserted by his dog near the edge of a precipice, and had nothing to aid him in groping his way but his staff. Whitefield so warmed with his subject, and enforced it with such graphic power, that the whole auditory was kept in breathless silence, as if it saw the movements of the poor old man; and at length, when the beggar was about to take the fatal step which would have hurled him down the precipice to certain destruction, Lord Chesterfield actually made a rush forward to save him, exclaiming aloud, "He is gone! he is gone!" The noble lord had been so entirely carried away by the preacher, that he forgot the whole was a picture."

Another leading characteristic of Whitefield's preaching was his tremendous earnestness. One poor uneducated man said of him, that "he preached like a lion". He succeeded in showing people that he at least believed all he was saying, and that his heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, were bent on making them believe it too. His sermons were not like the morning and evening gun at Portsmouth, a kind of formal discharge, fired off as a matter of course, that disturbs nobody. They were all life and fire. There was no getting away from them. Sleep was next to impossible. You must listen whether you liked it or not. There was a holy violence about him which firmly took your attention by storm. You were fairly carried off your legs by his energy before you had time to consider what you would do. This, we may be sure, was one secret of his success. We must convince men that we are in earnest ourselves, if we want to be believed. The difference between one preacher and another, is often not so much in the things said, as in the manner in which they are said.

It is recorded by one of his biographers that an American gentleman once went to hear him, for the first time, in consequence of the report he heard of his preaching powers. The day was rainy, the congregation comparatively thin, and the beginning of the sermon rather heavy. Our American friend began to say to himself, "This man is no great wonder after all". He looked round, and saw the congregation as little interested as himself. One old man, in front of the pulpit, had fallen asleep. But all at once Whitefield stopped short. His countenance changed. And then he suddenly broke forth in an altered tone: "If I had come to speak to you in my own name, you might well rest your elbows on your knees, and your heads on your hands, and sleep; and once in a while look up, and say, What is this babbler talking of? But I have not come to you in my own name. No! I have come to you in the name of the Lord of Hosts" (here he brought down his hand and foot with a force that made the building ring) "and I must and will be heard". The congregation started. The old man woke up at once. "Ay, ay!" cried Whitefield, fixing his eyes on him, "I have waked you up, have I? I meant to do it. I am not come here to preach to stocks and stones: I have come to you in the name of the Lord God of Hosts, and I must, and will, have an audience." The hearers were stripped of their apathy at once. Every word of the sermon after this was heard with deep attention, and the American gentleman never forgot it.

One more feature in Whitefield's preaching deserves special notice; and that is, the immense amount of pathos and feeling which it always contained. It was no uncommon thing with him to weep profusely in the pulpit. Cornelius Winter, who often accompanied him in his latter journeys, went so far as to say that he hardly ever knew him to get through a sermon without some tears. There seems to have been nothing of affectation in this. He felt intensely for the souls before him, and his feelings found an outlet in tears. Of all the ingredients of his success in preaching, none, I suspect, were so powerful as this. It awakened affections and touched secret springs in men, which no amount of reasonable and demonstration could have moved. It smoothed down the prejudices which many had conceived against him. They could not hate the man who wept so much over their souls. "I came to hear you", said one to him, "with my pocket full of stones, intending to break your head; but your sermon got the better of me, and broke my heart". Once become satisfied that a man loves you, and you will listen gladly to anything he has to say.

I will now ask the reader to add to this analysis of Whitefield's preaching, that even by nature he possessed several of the rarest gifts which fit a man to be an orator. His action was perfect - so perfect that even Garrick, the famous actor, gave it unqualified praise. His voice was as wonderful as his action - so powerful that he could make thirty thousand people hear him at once, and yet so musical and well toned that some said he could raise tears by his pronunciation of the word "Mesopotamia". His manner in the pulpit was so curiously graceful and fascinating that it was said that no one could hear him for five minutes without forgetting that he squinted. His fluency and command of appropriate language were of the highest order, prompting him always to use the right word and to put it in the right place. Add, I repeat, these gifts to the things already mentioned, and then consider whether there is not sufficient in our hands to account for his power and popularity as a preacher.

For my own part, I have no hesitation in saying that I believe no English preacher has ever possessed such a combination of excellent qualifications as Whitefield. Some, no doubt, have surpassed him in some of his gifts; others, perhaps, have equalled him in others. But for a well-balanced combination of some of the finest gifts that a preacher can possess, united with an unrivalled voice, manner, delivery, action, and command of words, Whitefield, I repeat my opinion, stands alone. No Englishman, I believe, dead or alive, has ever equalled him. And I suspect we shall always find that, just in proportion as preachers have approached that curious combination of rare gifts which Whitefield possessed, just in that very proportion have they attained what Clarendon defines true eloquence to be - "a strange power of making themselves believed".

The inner life and personal character of this great spiritual hero of the last century are a branch of my subject on which I shall not dwell at any length. In fact, there is no necessity for my doing so. He was a singularly transparent man. There was nothing about him requiring apology or explanation. His faults and good qualities were both clear and plain as noon-day. I shall therefore content myself

with simply pointing out the prominent features of his character, so far as they can be gathered from his letters and the accounts of his contemporaries, and then bring my sketch of him to a conclusion.

He was a man of deep and unfeigned humility. No one can read the fourteen hundred letters of his, published by Dr. Gillies, without observing this. Again and again, in the very zenith of his popularity, we find him speaking of himself and his works in the lowliest terms. "God be merciful to me a sinner", he writes on September 11, 1753, "and give me, for his infinite mercy's sake, an humble, thankful, and resigned heart. Truly I am viler than the vilest, and stand amazed at his employing such a wretch as I am." "Let none of my friends", he writes on December 27, 1753, "cry to such a sluggish, lukewarm, unprofitable worm, Spare thyself. Rather spur me on, I pray you, with an Awake, thou sleeper, and begin to do something for thy God." Language like this, no doubt, seems foolishness and affectation to the world; but the well-instructed Bible reader will see in it the heart-felt experience of all the brightest saints. It is the language of men like Baxter, and Brainerd, and M"Cheyne. It is the same mind that was in the inspired Apostle Paul. Those that have most light and grace are always the humblest men.

He was a man of burning love to our Lord Jesus Christ. That name which is "above every name" stands out incessantly in all his correspondence. Like fragrant ointment, it gives a savour to all his communications. He seems never weary of saying something about Jesus. "My Master", as George Herbert said, is never long out of his mind. His love, his atonement, his precious blood, his righteousness, his readiness to receive sinners, his patience and tender dealing with saints, are themes which appear ever fresh before his eyes. In this respect, at least, there is a curious likeness between him and that glorious Scotch divine, Samuel Rutherford.

He was a man of unwearied diligence and laboriousness about his Master's business. It would be difficult, perhaps, to name any one in the annals of the Churches who worked so hard for Christ, and so thoroughly spent himself in his service. Henry Venn, in a funeral sermon for him, preached at Bath, bore the following testimony:- "What a sign and wonder was this man of God in the greatness of his labours! One cannot but stand amazed that his mortal frame could, for the space of near thirty years, without interruption, sustain the weight of them; for what so trying to the human frame in youth especially, as long-continued, frequent, and violent straining of the lungs? Who that knows their structure would think it possible that a person little above the age of manhood could speak in a single week, and that for years - in general forty hours, and in very many weeks sixty - and that to thousands; and after this labour, instead of taking any rest, could be offering up prayers and intercessions, with hymns and spiritual songs, as his manner was, in every house to which he was invited? The truth is, that in point of labour this extraordinary servant of God did as much in a few weeks as most of those who exert themselves are able to do in the space of a year."

He was to the end a man of eminent self-denial. His style of living was most simple. He was remarkable to a proverb for moderation in eating and drinking. All through life he was an early riser. His usual hour for getting up was four o"clock, both in summer and winter; and equally punctual was he in retiring about ten at night. A man of prayerful habits, he frequently spent whole nights in reading and devotion. Cornelius Winter, who often slept in the same room, says that he would sometimes rise during the night for this purpose. He cared little for money, except as a help to the cause of Christ, and refused it, when pressed upon him for his own use, once to the amount of £7,000. He amassed no fortune, and founded no wealthy family. The little money he left behind him at his death arose entirely from the legacies of friends. The Pope's coarse saying about Luther, "This German beast does not love gold", might have been equally applied to Whitefield.

He was a man of remarkable disinterestedness, and singleness of eye. He seemed to live only for two objects - the glory of God and the salvation of souls. Of secondary and covert objects he knew nothing at all. He raised no party of followers who took his name. He established no denominational system, of which his own writings should be cardinal elements. A favourite expression of his is most characteristic of the man: "Let the name of George Whitefield perish, so long as Christ is exalted."

He was a man of a singularly happy and cheerful spirit. No one who saw him could ever doubt that he enjoyed his religion. Tried as he was in many ways throughout his ministry - slandered by some, despised by others, misrepresented by false brethren, opposed everywhere by the ignorant clergy of his time, worried by incessant controversy - his elasticity never failed him. He was eminently a rejoicing Christian, whose very demeanour recommended his Master's service. A venerable lady of New York, after his death, when speaking of the influences by which the Spirit won her heart to God, used these remarkable words, "Mr. Whitefield was so cheerful that it tempted me to become a Christian".

Last, but not least, he was a man of extraordinary charity, catholicity, and liberality in his religion. He knew nothing of that narrow-minded feeling which makes some men fancy that everything must be barren outside their own camps, and that their own party has got a complete monopoly of truth and heaven. He loved all who loved the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. He measured all by the measure which the angels use,-"Did they profess repentance towards God, faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, and holiness of conversation?" If they did, they were as his brethren. His soul was with such men, by whatever name they were called. Minor differences were wood, hay, and stubble to him. The marks of the Lord Jesus were the only marks he cared for. This catholicity is the more remarkable when the spirit of the times he lived in is considered. Even the Erskines, in Scotland, wanted him to preach for no other denomination but their own - viz., the Secession Church. He asked them, "Why only for them?" - and received the notable answer that "they were the Lord's people." This was more than Whitefield could stand. He asked "if there were no other Lord's people but themselves;" he told them, "if all others were the devil's people, they certainly had more need to be preached to;" and he wound up by informing them, that "if the Pope himself would lend him his pulpit, he would gladly proclaim the righteousness of Christ in it." To this catholicity of spirit he adhered all his days. If other Christians misrepresented him, he forgave them; and it they refused to work with him, he still loved them. Nothing could be a more weighty testimony against narrow-mindedness than his request, made shortly before his death, that, when he did die, John Wesley should be asked to preach his funeral sermon. Wesley and he had long ceased to agree about Calvinistic points; but Whitefield, to the very last, was determined to forget minor differences, and to regard Wesley as Calvin did Luther, "only as a good servant of Jesus Christ." On another occasion a censorious professor of religion asked him "whether he thought they would see John Wesley in heaven?" "No, sir," was the striking answer; "I fear not. He will be so near the throne, and we shall be at such a distance, that we shall hardly get a sight of him."

Far be it from me to say that the subject of this chapter was a man without faults. Like all God's saints, he was an imperfect creature.

He sometimes erred, in judgment. He often drew rash conclusions about Providence, and mistook his own inclination for God's leadings. He was frequently hasty both with his tongue and his pen. He had no business to say that "Archbishop Tillotson knew no more of the gospel than Mahomet." He was wrong to set down some people as the Lord's enemies, and others as the Lord's friends so precipitately and positively as he sometimes did. He was to blame for denouncing many of the clergy as "letter-learned Pharisees," because they could not receive the doctrine of the new birth. But still, after all this has been said, there can be no doubt that in the main he was an eminently holy, self-denying, and consistent man. "The faults of his character," says an American writer, "were like spots on the sun - detected without much difficulty by any cool and careful observer who takes pains to look for them, but to all practical purposes lost in one general and genial effulgence." Well indeed would it be for the Churches of our day, if God was to give them more ministers like the great evangelist of England a hundred years ago!

It only remains to say that those who wish to know more about Whitefield would do well to peruse the seven volumes of his letters and other publications, which IDr. Gillies edited in 1770. I am much mistaken if they are not agreeably surprised at their contents. To me it is matter of astonishment that, amidst the many reprints of the nineteenth century, no publisher has yet attempted a complete reprint of the works of George Whitefield.

A short extract from the conclusion of a sermon preached by Whitefield on Kennington Common, may be interesting to some readers, and may serve to give, them some faint idea of the great preacher's style. It was a sermon on the text, "What think ye of Christ ?" (Matt. xxii. 42.)

"O my brethren, my heart is enlarged towards you. I trust I feel something of that hidden but powerful presence of Christ, whilst I am preaching to you. Indeed it is sweet - it is exceedingly comfortable. All the harm I wish you who without cause are my enemies, is that you felt the like. Believe me, though it would be hell to my soul to return to a natural state again, yet I would willingly change states with you for a little while, that you might know what it is to have Christ dwelling in your hearts by faith.

Do not turn your backs. Do not let the devil hurry you away. Be not afraid of convictions. Do not think worse of the doctrine because preached without the church walls. Our Lord, in the days of his flesh, preached on a mount, in a ship, and a field; and I am persuaded many have felt his gracious presence here. Indeed, we speak what we know. Do not therefore reject the kingdom of God against yourselves. Be so wise as to receive our witness.

"I cannot, I will not let you go. Stay a little, and let us reason together. However lightly you may esteem your souls, I know our Lord has set an unspeakable value on them. He thought them worthy of his most precious blood. I beseech you, therefore, O sinners, be ye reconciled to God. I hope you do not fear being accepted in the Beloved. Behold, he calleth you. Behold, he prevents, and follows you with his mercy, and hath sent forth his servants into the highways and hedges to compel you to come in.

"Remember, then, that at such an hour of such a day, in such a year, in this place, you were all told what you ought to think concerning Jesus Christ. If you now perish, it will not be from lack of knowledge. I am free from the blood of you all. You cannot say I have been preaching damnation to you. You cannot say I have, like legal preachers, been requiring you to make bricks without straw. I have not bidden you to make yourselves saints and then come to God. I have offered you salvation on as cheap terms as you can desire. I have offered you Christ's whole wisdom, Christ's whole righteousness, Christ's whole sanctification and eternal redemption, if you will but believe on him. If you say you cannot believe, you say right; for faith, as well as every other blessing, is the gift of God. But then wait upon God, and who knows but he may have mercy on thee.

"Why do we not entertain more loving thoughts of Christ? Do you think he will have mercy on others and not on you? Are you not sinners? Did not Jesus Christ come into the world to save sinners?

"If you say you are the chief of sinners, I answer that will be no hindrance to your salvation. Indeed it will not, if you lay hold on Christ by faith. Read the Evangelists, and see how kindly he behaved to his disciples, who had fled from and denied him. 'Go, tell my brethren,' says he. He did not say, 'Go, tell those traitors,' but, 'Go, tell my brethren and Peter.' It is as though he had said, 'Go, tell my brethren in general, and Peter in particular, that I am risen. Oh, comfort his poor drooping heart. Tell him I am reconciled to him. Bid him weep no more so bitterly. For though with oaths and curses he thrice denied me, yet I have died for his sins; I have risen again for his justification: I freely forgive him all." Thus slow to anger and of great kindness, was our all-merciful High Priest. And do you think he has changed his nature and forgets poor sinners, now he is exalted to the right hand of God? No; he is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; and sitteth there only to make intercession for us.

"Come, then, ye harlots; come, ye publicans; come, ye most abandoned sinners, come and believe on Jesus Christ. Though the whole world despise you and cast you out, yet he will not disdain to take you up. Oh amazing, oh infinitely condescending love!' even you he will not be ashamed to call his brethren. How will you escape if you neglect such a glorious offer of salvation? What would the damned spirits now in the prison of hell give if Christ was so freely offered to them? And why are we not lifting up our eyes in torments? Does any one out of this great multitude dare say he does not deserve damnation? Why are we left, and others taken away by death? What is this but an instance of God's free grace, and a sign of his good-will toward us? Let God's goodness lead us to repentance. Oh, let there be joy in heaven over some of you repenting! "

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